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Jessie Burton



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Jessie Burton — Frontispiece.



"Why, it can't be my beautiful new book that I lent you?"
p. 34.

JESSIE BURTON;

OR,

ANGER IN DELAY.

By the Author of

"DR. KENDALL'S CHILDREN AND THEIR COUSIN."

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JESSIE BURTON;

OR,

DANGER IN DELAY.

CHAPTER I.

PROCRASTINATION.

“HAT is the very best story I ever read in all my life,” said a little girl to herself, one pleasant June morning, as she sat on the steps of the back piazza, and turned over the leaves of a book which she held in her hand. “I’m sorry I’ve finished it, and I wish it was twice as long. But I’ve read to the very last word. And now I wonder what I’ll do? It’s pretty warm here in the sun, and I think I’ll go in. Besides, I must put away this book. I wish I was going somewhere, it’s so lovely to-day! Oh, there’s father

opening the carriage-house ! Where can he be going ? I mean to ask him to let me go too."

Dropping her book, she ran a few steps, then stopped and looked back. "I suppose I ought to take that book in," she thought. "I promised to be very careful. But if I do it now, father will be gone, I'm afraid. I'll only leave it a very few minutes, though, for fear something might happen to it."

She turned again and ran on. "Father, I thought you had gone to the store. Are you going to ride ? Can't I go with you ? It's such a pleasant morning, and I haven't anything to do."

"Don't get in the way, Jessie," said her father, who was drawing out the buggy. "I am in the greatest haste. Go and call Sam to help me harness Prince. You gave him my message yesterday, didn't you, about having the horse shod ?"

"Oh, father," said Jessie, "I forgot all about it ! I'm very sorry. Will it make any difference ? Won't there be time enough this morning ?"

"Time enough!" repeated her father. "You always think there'll be 'time enough' for every thing! Didn't I tell you I was in a hurry? And now I must wait an hour at least for the horse. The delay may make a difference to me, and it certainly will to you, for I was going to take you with me as far as your uncle John's, and leave you till I came back. But I shall have no time to stop now."

"Oh, father, if I go and tell Sam this very moment, won't there be time? I do want to go so much!"

"You may go and tell Sam to come and help me; but it is too late, or will be when I can get off, for you to go. How came you to forget what I told you? But there's no need of my asking. Of course, instead of doing it immediately, you waited for something else. And now you are waiting here instead of going at once for Sam."

"I'm going, father," said Jessie. "I only wanted to ask you whether if the blacksmith wasn't very long there wouldn't be time? And there comes Sam now! Please, father, do take

me. I'll run down to the blacksmith's now, myself, and ask him to hurry just as fast as he can."

"No, Jessie," said her father, "there is no use in that. It is too late now for any hurrying to benefit you. You must go without your visit, and if the loss teaches you to obey promptly——"

"I really will next time," said Jessie. "I haven't been to Uncle John's for ever so long, and there's the new baby, and the calf, and the colt, and every thing, that I want to see so much. Don't you think there will possibly be time enough for you to stop at the farm?"

Her father made her no reply, and, as the horse was now harnessed, he a moment after drove away. Jessie returned disconsolately to the house.

"It's too bad!" she said to herself. "Such a lovely day, too!" I do think father might have let me go with him. I wish I hadn't forgotten. And I wish I hadn't stopped to see the soldiers go by, for that made me forget. To think that I might have spent the

whole day at Uncle John's! I'll go in and see if Willie is awake yet, and tell mother all about it."

"Isn't it too bad, mother," she asked, when she had finished her tale, "that I have to stay at home? And I haven't any thing to do. If Willie was awake I'd play with him. He takes such a long sleep this morning! What would you do, mother, if you were me?"

"I don't know exactly," replied her mother. "It's a pity you lost the visit; but I wouldn't let it make me unhappy all day."

"If I only had something to do," said Jessie.

"Well," said her mother, glancing at the table covered with work, "you might help me, Jessie, with this sewing. I don't know how I'm to get it all done before I go.

"Oh, mother," said Jessie, in a fretful tone, "you know I hate to sew! Please don't ask me to do that. I mean something nice."

"There's your room, Jessie, to be swept. You really must do that to-day, for neither Jane nor I will have time. I think you'd better go and do it now, for fear it will be put off till it is too

late. You know you have no time on any day but Saturday."

"Oh, need I go now, mother?" said Jessie. "I do hate that sweeping! I wish we were very rich, like the Lansings, and kept three or four girls, and then I'd never have to do it. Katie don't."

"It wouldn't hurt her to do it," said Jessie's mother; and I don't believe Katie would mind it. She isn't as idle as you are, Jessie."

"Oh, I don't believe Katie likes to work any better than I do, mother. I don't believe anybody likes to work."

"Why, I like it, Jessie. And so does every sensible person. People are always unhappy who have nothing to do. Haven't you just been asking me, yourself, for some work?"

"Oh, I did not mean work at all, mother! I meant something nice,—some kind of play."

"Oh, Jessie, don't do that, at any rate," said her mother, as she took up the scissors and began snipping a piece of paper into small shreds. "Your aunt will be down presently, and I don't want the room in disorder."

"I'll pick 'em all up pretty soon," said Jessie. "I want to see if I can make something."

"You'd better go and do your sweeping," said her mother. "You'll forget it, I'm afraid."

"Oh, no, I won't. I want to wait and see if Willie won't wake up, so that I can play with him a little first. There is no hurry about the sweeping, is there, mother?"

"No, I don't know that there is," replied her mother. "But you make me nervous with all those bits of paper, Jessie. Your aunt will be down in a minute, and you know she's so particular, I don't like to have any thing around. I wish you'd stop your cutting now."

"I will in a minute, mother. Aunt Maria is very particular, isn't she? I remember a good while ago, before Willie was born, you took me to her house, and she said I was a careless child. Do you remember it, mother?"

"No; but I dare say you were careless."

"It was only because I didn't hang up my hat the very minute I came in; and then, I didn't notice it on the floor, and rocked on it and smashed the crown. I recollect it, and

how cross Aunt Maria was. I don't like particular people. Do you, mother?"

"Why, yes, some particular people," said her mother, smiling. Aunt Maria is particular, certainly, but then she is pleasant too."

"I don't think so," said Jessie. "She looked at me so sharp at the breakfast-table this morning."

"That was when you came in after we were half through, wasn't it?" asked her mother, laughing. "Aunt Maria is famous for punctuality. I expect you'll have to be more prompt when I'm gone, Jessie. I'm sure I wish you would."

"Oh, mother, I do wish you weren't going!" said Jessie. "I don't like Aunt Maria, and I know I shan't have a good time at all. I know I'll be miserable. Won't you ask father again to let me go with you? Please do, mother. I wouldn't be a bit of trouble, and I'd help take care of Willie."

"I should like you to go very much," said her mother. "But there's no use in asking your father again, after what he said. If you

hadn't been so idle and naughty at school, Jessie——”

“Well, mother,” said Jessie, blushing, “I’m sure I’m sorry, and I told father so. I would try to be better if he’d only let me go. Won’t you ask him, mother? for I know I’ll be so unhappy here with Aunt Maria. And I’ll miss you and Willie so much. I don’t know what I’ll do without Willie. I never was parted from him in all my life. Oh, see, mother, he’s awake! The little darling!”

Jessie dropped scissors and papers, and ran to the crib where the baby lay, smiling and crowing, his cheeks flushed with sleep, his golden hair curling in moist rings upon his forehead, and his big blue eyes as bright as diamonds. There was not such another baby in the whole of Lansingville, Jessie thought,—so pretty, so good, so cunning: not two years old yet, and able to run around and say half-a-dozen words. One of these he now shouted out, to her extreme delight. “Dettie!” “Dettie!” “Oh, you dearest little brother!” she exclaimed, taking him up, and almost smother-

ing him with kisses ; “ did you call sister Jessie ? Mother, isn’t he the smartest child you ever heard of ? *I think so, any way,*” she continued, as her mother laughed. “ He’s the very nicest baby in the world, and I can’t spare him to go away. I’m afraid something will happen to him. Mother, *do* take good care of him !”

Her mother laughed again.

“ Oh, you may laugh, mother ; but I do love Willie so, that if he was killed or any thing, I believe I’d die too. He’s such a sweet, precious little brother !”

“ I’m glad you love him so much, dear,” said her mother. “ I was so afraid you wouldn’t.”

“ Why, mother ?” asked Jessie, surprised.

“ Oh, people said when he was born that you’d be jealous,—that is, you wouldn’t like a brother, because you had been so long the only child. And I was rather afraid of it myself. But I remember you kissed and hugged him so that I thought his feeble little breath would be all gone.”

“ How could people think that I would be so silly and childish as to want to be the only

one?" cried Jessie. "Why, I was more than ten years old. Quite too old to be so foolish. And then I'd always wanted a brother or sister; don't you recollect, mother? I was delighted with Willie, and I wouldn't part with him now for all the world. I do wish I was going with him. Don't you think it's any use to ask father? Well," continued Jessie, as her mother shook her head, "I might as well make the best of it, then, and have a good time with him to-day."

She was soon in a grand frolic with Willie: pillows tumbled out of the crib, chairs overturned, the table-cover pulled off, and Mrs. Burton's work-box upset on the floor. Willie was rolling the spools in all directions, when steps were heard approaching.

"Jessie, Jessie, here comes your aunt! Pick up the things as quick as you can!"

Jessie and her mother made a mutual scramble, but had not mended matters much when the door opened. The lady who entered was Mr. Burton's elder sister, who had arrived the previous evening for the purpose of taking

charge of the house during a visit of her brother and sister to some relatives at a distance. She looked a little surprised as she saw the confusion ; but Mrs. Burton rose hurriedly and apologized for the appearance of the room. She smiled, and, saying, " Little boys will be mischievous sometimes," began herself to assist in restoring order. When all was again in place except Jessie's scraps, which lay scattered over the carpet, Aunt Maria pointed to those, with another smile and a quick glance at her niece, and asked if Willie had learned to cut horses and dogs.

" Jessie," said her mother, reproachfully, " I knew you wouldn't pick those up. I wish you'd do it now."

Drawing a chair to the table, Miss Burton took up some of the work lying there. " I see you are very busy," she said. " Let me help you."

" Yes," replied Mrs. Burton ; " I hardly see how I can get off on Monday, I have so much to do first.

" Oh, it would be a pity not to go, when your

other arrangements are all made," said Miss Burton. "I never like putting off. Don't you think, together, we can finish these?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Burton. "After all, I needn't do them all now, I suppose. There are those things for Willie that must be made, and some aprons for Jessie that I should like to finish. They have been around this great while, and she really needs them."

"Never mind those," said Aunt Maria. "Leave them. I will see that they are made."

"I am afraid it will trouble you too much," said Mrs. Burton. "I have been trying to get Jessie to do them; but she hasn't yet. She is not very fond of sewing. Children like to play, you know."

Jessie was again engaged in a romp with Willie, rather more subdued than before, however. Aunt Maria glanced at her, and then at the carpet, where the scraps of paper still remained.

Mrs. Burton noticed the look. "Jessie, child!" she said, "didn't you hear me tell you to pick up those papers? Why don't you do it?"

“I will, mother, in a minute,” answered Jessie. “Willie has got hold of my hair, and I can’t get up.”

A few minutes after she rose, and asking if she might take Willie into the garden, ran off with him. “Jessie is rather forgetful,” said her mother. “I will pick up the papers myself.”

As Jessie crossed the piazza she saw the book she had been reading lying on the floor where she had left it, and stopped with the intention of then taking it into the house. But Willie pulled her to come on, and, saying to herself, “Never mind now, I don’t believe anything will happen to it, but I’ll just put it up here on the seat, for fear,” she did so, and went on. “Now, Willie,” she said, aloud, “we’ll call Lion, and have some fun.”

Lion, the big Newfoundland puppy, came eagerly, and the three had a merry game, little Willie getting many a tumble, but jumping up with a great deal of pluck, and running on as fast as his feet would carry him.

“I’m tired, Willie,” said Jessie at last, throw-

ing herself on the grass. "Let's sit down and rest."

Willie was not at all tired, and ran along the path. Jessie sat still a few minutes, then, with a sudden recollection, sprang to her feet and ran after him. "Oh, that knife!" she exclaimed, as she heard Willie's voice in tones of great delight from behind some bushes where he had gone. As she turned into the other path she saw him flourishing something around his head, which Sam, who had been working near, was trying to take from him.

"Oh, get it, Sam, quick!" cried Jessie, running up. "He'll hurt himself! Here, Willie, give it to me."

But Willie had no idea of giving it to any one. Screaming with delight at his prize,—a long, sharp pruning-knife,—he toddled off with it. Sam and Jessie soon caught him and took it away, though he clutched it so tightly that one of his fingers was slightly cut before he would let go.

"Oh, how thankful I am!" said Jessie, soothing the now frightened child, and taking him

in her arms. "Oh, Sam, he might have killed himself!"

"He might have cut himself considerably worse than he did," said Sam. "How in the world that knife came there on the grass is a mystery. I put it in the tool-house yesterday, I know."

"I had it afterwards," said Jessie, with a blush. "I wanted to cut something. I meant to put the knife back, but I forgot at first, and then it was dark, and I thought I'd wait till morning. And then it went all out of my head, till I happened to think of it just now. Oh, if Willie had hurt himself much, what should I have done? You poor baby boy!" she continued, kissing him, "sister will never let you get hurt again."

Lion had been standing by, wagging his tail in sympathy, and as Jessie carried Willie to the house, he followed. But he was not allowed within doors, being rather too much inclined to mischief, and Jessie shut him out now.

Mrs. ^{J. A.}Barton was much alarmed when she saw the blood, and, at first, quite angry with

Jessie. But as the hurt was not serious, and as Jessie was very penitent, and full of commiseration for her brother, she escaped with a slight rebuke.

When Willie was once more playing about, his troubles forgotten, Aunt Maria, who was busily sewing, remarked, "I suppose, Jessie, the knife is safely put away now?"

"I expect Sam put it away," answered Jessie.

"You expect!" cried her mother. "Go this moment, Jessie, and see that it is safe. I would not have it left again where Willie could get it for the world!"

Jessie went out. As she passed the piazza on her way to Sam, a sight met her eyes which drove the knife from her mind. Lion had remained pawing at the door, and whining to get in till he was tired, and then, considering what next he should do, spied the book on the seat where it had been left. To knock it off, smell round it, taste of its morocco binding, and shake it thoroughly between his teeth, took but a short time, and when discovered, he had made sad work of the beautiful red book, with its gilt-

edged leaves, many of which were torn out and scattered over the floor.

“ Oh, Lion, Lion ! you naughty, wicked dog ! ” cried Jessie, as soon as she could speak. “ What have you done ? Give it to me, sir ! Oh, it’s all torn, and bitten, and ruined ! What will Katie say to me ? When she told me to be so careful, too ! It’s all your fault, you ugly dog ! ”

Seizing a stick, she ran after him. “ What now, Miss Jessie ? ” asked Sam, as the dog ran up to him for protection from Jessie’s blows. “ Oh, for shame, miss, to beat the poor creature so ! Has he been into mischief ? ”

“ I should think he had ! See there, Sam, he’s destroyed that elegant book ! I wish you’d give him a good beating ! He ought to have known better. ”

“ He’s only a puppy, you know, miss, ” said Sam. “ How did he get the book ? It must have been left somewhere. ”


“ Oh, I left it just for a few minutes on the piazza, ” said Jessie. But he oughtn’t to have touched it. And I do think Sam, he ought to be punished. Now, don’t you ? ”

"Well, miss," said Sam, with a sly look, "somebody was to blame, certain. Whether it was Lion or not, perhaps it would not be very polite for me to say. And *I* think it's mean to beat a dumb creature for what he thought was only play."

"Sam, I'll certainly tell father you're very saucy!" said Jessie, turning away with a very red face. Sam, who had been in the family since Jessie was a baby, only grinned, and said nothing, while Jessie went back with the remains of the book, secretly convinced that Sam was right, and ashamed of her carelessness and injustice.

CHAPTER II.

LOSSES.

ESSIE was very much troubled indeed about the book. It had only been after many persuasions that her friend was induced to lend it, and Jessie had promised extreme care. What would Katie think of her? And how vexed she must be when she saw the poor remains of her beautiful birthday present, received but the last week from her father! Heartily did Jessie now wish that she had not borrowed it, and regret that she had not returned it as soon as finished, or, at least, that she had delayed putting it in a place of safety.

But wishes and regrets were alike useless. The book was destroyed. There was one comfort, however. It might be replaced. But that would take money, and Jessie had none.

She went to consult with her mother, and ask how much it would cost.

“It certainly ought to be replaced,” said her mother. “You must tell your father——”

“Oh, mother!” interrupted Jessie, “I don’t like to do that. Won’t you please give me some money? Father will be angry.”

“I dare say he will,” said her mother, “for it is not more than two weeks since he had to pay for that expensive book that you left in the summer-house till it was soaked with rain. Didn’t he tell you then that you would have to pay for your next piece of carelessness yourself?”

“But how can I, mother?” asked Jessie, despondingly. “You know I haven’t any money.”

“What has become of the five dollars your Uncle John sent you on your birthday? Oh, yes, I recollect,” continued Mrs. Burton, as Jessie coloured, but did not reply. “You left it on the table, instead of putting it away safely, as I told you, and Willie found it and tore it to pieces. I should think you would learn,

Jessie, to do things at once. If you had only brought Katie's book in when you first thought of doing so, instead of waiting to play, all this trouble would have been avoided."

"Well, mother, I'm sure I wish I had," said Jessie, with a sigh, as she looked at the unfortunate volume. "And I do believe it's putting off things that makes me so much trouble. I wish I could cure myself of it; but, you know, mother, I've tried ever so many times. When I lost the money, I made up my mind I'd never again wait a minute when I knew I ought to do any thing. But it don't seem any use. I always feel as though a few minutes wouldn't make any difference, and then I forget."

"But you see it does make a difference, Jessie. And you ought to try to overcome the habit, for it will grow stronger the more you indulge it, and will be sure to make you trouble all your life, and real sorrow, too, perhaps. I knew a little girl who was told to shut a door. Like you, she did not think that waiting a few minutes could do any harm, and so went on with her play, and presently forgot

what she had been told. But the door which she left open led into a room where there was a fire on the hearth ; her little sister ran in, and going too near the flames, her clothes took fire, and, before any one could get to her assistance, she was burned to death."

"Oh, mother, how dreadful!" said Jessie. "I suppose the little girl who left the door open felt terribly?"

"She never forgave herself," said Mrs. Burton. "She knew that she was the cause of her sister's death, and though she sincerely repented of her neglect and disobedience, yet she never could forget. She was a sorrowful woman all her days. I hope you will take warning from this sad story, Jessie. Think if such a thing were to happen to you——"

"Oh, mother," interrupted Jessie, "it couldn't! I shall always take the very best care of Willie, I love him so much. I'm sure I'll never put off any thing about him!"

"Why, Jessie, how can you speak so positively, when there was the knife this very day? Didn't he get that because you neglected to put



it safely away, and might he not have even killed himself if Sam had not been there? Oh, Jessie, I tremble to think of it! Do, my child, try more earnestly to obey directly, and do every thing in the right time, or you may suffer as severely as my poor friend."

"I will try, I am sure, mother," said Jessie. "I forgot about the knife; but I'll be very, very careful after this; for if any thing were to happen to Willie, I should be just like that woman, and never be happy again. But don't let us talk any more about dreadful things, please. I'm really going to do things right away, and then nothing bad will happen. Only, I wish I had begun sooner, before this book was spoiled. What can I do about it, mother? I know I ought to get Katie another. Won't you please give me some money? for father will only say 'no' if I ask *him*."

"I can't spare any now, Jessie; and I think you ought to pay for a new book yourself, and then, perhaps, you would remember why the accident occurred."

"But how can I, when I have no money?"

"I have thought of a way, Jessie," said Mrs. Burton, after a pause. "You know I intended to buy you a handsome parasol when I went to the city. But you can do without it, and take the money it would cost for a book."

"But I want a new parasol very much, mother. My old brown one is all cracked, and don't look fit to be seen. Must I go without one?"

"You know I very seldom say that you *must* do any thing, Jessie. I'd rather you should choose to do right for yourself."

"But, mother, my parasol is really shocking. The girls laughed at it the last time I carried it. I'll get it and show you."

"Yes, it is rather forlorn," said her mother, as Jessie exhibited her property. "But it will still keep the sun out of your eyes, and, on the whole, I think it looks better than Katie's book. At any rate, you must either do without the new parasol or ask your father to buy you a book."

Jessie had already made up her mind that her father should know nothing of the matter,

as she had too distinct a remembrance of the punishment which had followed his discovery of her former negligence to wish to incur his anger again. But how could she give up the new parasol? She had long since chosen the colour, and had seen it, in imagination, quite eclipsing her friend Susy Norton's, which was the admiration of every girl in the village. For though Susy's was of elegant blue silk, with a white lining, it had only an old-fashioned ivory handle, while Jessie's was to have beads, and fringe, and the handsomest stick of carved wood that could be found. Such, at least, had been Jessie's fond hope. And now to lose all! And just because she had left Katie's book a few minutes in a wrong place! It was too bad!

Mrs. Burton had left the room, and Jessie was still standing, parasol in one hand and book in the other, gradually coming to the conclusion that she *could* not give up her coveted treasure, and that some other way must be found out of her difficulty, when she was startled by a rap at the door opening on the piazza, the upper part of which was of glass.

Looking up, whom should Jessie see peeping through but Katie herself? With a sudden impulse, Jessie concealed both book and parasol under her apron, and tried to look unconcerned as her friend came in.

“How do you do, Jessie? I’ve come for you to take a walk; it’s lovely this afternoon, and all the girls are going down by the river to get wild flowers; and may-be if old Jake is there fishing he’ll take us down to the Island, and we’ll have a picnic. We’re all going to take something to eat, any way. Come, Jessie, ask your mother, and then be quick and get ready. I came early for you, and I’ll stay and help you, for you’re most always late, you know, and the girls can’t wait.”

At any other time Jessie would have eagerly accepted such an invitation; now she was confused by her friend’s unexpected appearance, and could think of nothing but the book. Feeling it slipping from the hand under her apron, and not having the courage to take it out and acknowledge the truth, she surprised Katie very much by making no answer to her

kind offer, but turning suddenly and running away. What Jessie meant to do afterwards she did not know herself: all that she could plan was to escape present detection.

But she had scarcely reached the door when the book again slipped, and this time quite to the floor, where it lay,—gnawed covers, torn leaves and all,—plainly in sight of Katie, who had hastened after her, that she might find out the cause of this strange behaviour.

“What is the matter?” she asked, as Jessie, bursting into tears, stooped to gather the scattered fragments. “Have you torn your book? I’m sorry! Let me help you pick it up. Why, Jessie, how in the world did it get in so many pieces? I never saw such a thing!”

“Oh, Katie,” sobbed Jessie, “I—I don’t know what you’ll say! It’s—it’s yours.”

“Mine!” exclaimed Katie, in astonishment. “What one? Why, Jessie,” she continued, looking more closely at one of the leaves, “is this—why, it can’t be my beautiful new book that I lent you, is it? Why, Jessie Burton,” she went on, growing more excited and angry

as the tearful explanation most reluctantly given made her comprehend the matter, "I should think you would be ashamed. You're the most careless, wicked girl I ever saw! You've ruined my beautiful birthday present, that I thought so much of! And when you promised to take such care of it, too! You're a wicked storyteller, and I'll never speak to you again!"

Refusing to listen to any excuses, she snatched the leaves and covers, and, declaring that she would show them to her father, and then Jessie should see what would happen, she ran out of the house.

That something very fearful was impending seemed certain to Jessie. But there was not time to think much of what it could be, for Katie's quick step was presently heard returning, and, rushing in as vehemently as she had gone out, she threw her arms around Jessie, and begged her pardon for her unkindness. "I oughtn't to have spoken so," she said. "I didn't think."

"And don't you care, then, about the book?" asked Jessie, in surprise.

"Oh yes! of course," said Katie. "I feel dreadfully about it. But then I know I ought not to be cross and unkind. So *do* forgive me, Jessie, please."

"I think you ought to forgive *me*," said Jessie. "I really am very sorry, Katie, that your book was spoiled. And you are very good not to be angry."

"I was angry enough at first," said Katie. "But then I remember what I promised father the other day, and that made me stop, and then I came back."

"What did you promise?" asked Jessie.

"To try to be good," said Katie. "Father talks to me so much about it, and tells me how wrong it is to get angry, as I am always doing. And oh, Jessie, I'm afraid father's growing worse! He can't walk now, and the pain is very bad. And may-be he'll go away to France to see a famous surgeon there."

"And will he get cured?" asked Jessie.

"I don't know. Of course we hope so, but mother looks very sorrowful when I ask her. Oh, Jessie, you used to think I had such a nice

time because my father was rich, and I had a pony carriage and ever so many nice things. But I'd gladly give them all if father could only be well as yours is. I wouldn't care if we were so poor that we had to live in one room."

"But may-be he'll get well, after all," said Jessie. "My uncle went somewhere in Europe,—to Smyrna, or somewhere,—and he got well."

"Oh, Jessie," said Katie, smiling through her tears, "Smyrna isn't in Europe. It's in Asia."

"Well, never mind," said Jessie. "I never can remember those places; but I know it's over there somewhere, and I think your father had better go there, for Uncle Edward was a great deal worse than he is, and now he is as well as anybody."

"Well, I'll tell him about it," said Katie, wiping her eyes, "for I want him to go to the very best place for curing people. Oh, Jessie, you don't know how badly I feel when I think of him. It was partly that which made me so angry about the book. Because, you see, it

was his present on my birthday, and perhaps he'll never give me another. And I am very sorry that this one is destroyed. But never mind, Jessie, you can't help it now, and I know you'll be more careful another time."

"Yes, I will, truly!" said Jessie. "I'm never going to be so careless again. Mother says it all comes from putting off things, and I won't want to do that any more, I'm certain, after all the trouble I've had. And, Katie, I'm going to buy you——"

The thought of the much-desired parasol made Jessie hesitate for a moment. The next she went on resolutely: "Yes, I will buy you another book, just as handsome as this was."

"Oh, you needn't do that," said Katie. "You know I have plenty of books."

Jessie insisted, though, presently informing her friend of the great sacrifice she would be obliged to make, she was secretly much comforted by Katie's still more energetic refusal to accept it.

"It wouldn't be the one father gave me," said Katie; "and I don't care for any other.

So you mustn't give up your parasol, for you really need it. To tell you the truth, Jessie,—but you mustn't be offended,—I haven't thought your old brown one was respectable this long time. Is this it?" she asked, picking it up from the floor. "How came it here? Oh, that reminds me! Our walk! I forgot all about it. You want to go, Jessie, don't you? We'll have a splendid time! I do hope the girls haven't gone; but if they have, we can run after them. Don't let us think any more about the book, but hurry to get off, or it will be too late."

Jessie ran eagerly to ask permission, but returned with so downcast a face that Katie asked instantly, "Oh, why won't your mother let you go? I'll run and ask her."

"No, never mind, Katie," said Jessie, with tears again in her eyes. "It won't be of any use. I've got to sweep my room, and mother won't let me wait till I come back. And of course it will be too late when I get through."

"Will it take long?" asked Katie. "Why didn't you sweep this morning? That's the

time to do it, I know, for Bridget always sweeps then."

"I wish I had," said Jessie. "Mother told me to, but I wanted to wait and play with Willie. And now I've got to do it, and lose my walk. It's too bad! I don't see why mother won't let me wait till by-and-by or till Monday. She often has before. I do believe it's just because Aunt Maria's here. If she hadn't been sitting in the room, I know I could have coaxed mother."

"What has your Aunt Maria to do with it?"

"Oh, she's so dreadfully particular. The whole house must be as neat as a pin while she is here. I do wish she wasn't going to stay. I know I shan't like her one bit. She's so prim, and makes everybody do things without waiting a single minute."

"But I thought that was what you were going to do," said Katie. "Didn't you say you wouldn't put off things after this?"

Jessie coloured. Her resolution had vanished at the first temptation. Her mother, vexed to find that her advice had produced no effect, and

that Jessie was as ready as ever to assert that there would be time enough by-and-by for all that she wished to defer now, had spoken more decidedly than usual, and with a reproof for the relapse into the very fault she had just promised to give up.

Jessie was irritated and still more annoyed by Katie's well-meant words. She replied so unkindly that Katie was indignant for a moment. But again, conquering herself, she said "Good bye!" pleasantly, feeling really sorry that Jessie must lose her pleasure.

When she was gone, Jessie went up-stairs, but instead of at once setting about her task, she cried and pouted for nearly an hour, by which means she deprived herself of yet another enjoyment; for when she had finally made up her mind that there was no use in any further bemoaning her hard fate, and had begun to work in earnest, Katie once more made her appearance, now in her pony carriage, and calling to Jessie to put her head out of the window, informed her that she had concluded to give up the walk, and was going for a drive instead, and


that she had come for Jessie, supposing that by this time she was surely at liberty.

But though Jessie urged that she would be in a very little while, Katie could not wait, having been told to ride in a certain direction on an errand which must be done immediately.

“Oh, dear!” thought Jessie, turning away from the window, “to think that I might have had a ride in that dear little carriage! And I know Katie would have let me drive the General. I’d rather do that than even to go to the river. But I have to lose everthing. It’s too bad!”

CHAPTER III.

AUNT MARIA.

 HE travellers set out early on Monday morning, and Jessie, after lingering at the gate to watch them on their way to the cars, and then to catch a glimpse through the trees of the train as it flew past, slowly returned to the house, feeling lonely, dissatisfied that she could not have been of the party, and by no means inclined to apply herself to the lessons which were awaiting her within doors. It seemed hard that she must stay at home and study, and go to school, instead of enjoying herself. Jessie disliked school; and it was no wonder that she did, for her tardiness and want of proper preparation of her lessons brought her into frequent disgrace there. She was seldom far from the lowest place in the classes, and instead of being able, when recess

came, to take part in the games of the others, she was generally obliged to stay and learn the neglected tasks.

So often had this been the case lately, that more than one complaint had been made by her teachers. Only the last week a note to her father caused him to be seriously displeased, and to decide that Jessie should not, as he at first intended, be allowed to accompany her mother and himself on their visit. It was in vain that Jessie had begged and promised. She had wasted too much time already, her father said, and must act differently in future, or she would find that still more unpleasant results might take place. And then he had talked to her very gravely of the one seemingly small fault which led to so many others. This sad want of improvement at school, neglect of duties at home, even disobedience and untruthfulness, all arose, as he showed her plainly, from her habit of delay. For not doing as she was told, and failing to fulfil a promise, was as really disobeying and being untrue—though in a different manner—as actually refusing to mind, or telling

a falsehood. And it could be no excuse to say, "I forgot;" or, "I thought there would be time enough." "Suppose an engineer," her father had gone on to say, "on a train of cars, knowing that at a certain time it was his duty to see that his engine was in proper order, should put off doing so because he wished to read a newspaper or go to sleep. Would it be any excuse, when the boiler burst or the train ran off the track, for him to say, 'I thought a few minutes would make no difference;' or, 'I quite forgot all about it?' Or suppose the captain of a ship, when a storm was approaching, and every thing depended on his presence and directions to his sailors, should quietly walk into his cabin and eat his dinner, saying: 'There'll be time enough to attend to the ship by-and-by.' Would he have any excuse if his vessel were lost? And though such very serious consequences may not always follow neglect of duty, yet there must be danger in delay. For God has appointed a time for every thing, and what is not done in its own time must either take the time of something else or not be done at all. And

even if no harm should come to us in this world from leaving duties undone, we know that a day of account is surely drawing near, when the dreadful sentence will be pronounced, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not, ye are unfaithful servants.' For such there remains but the 'outer darkness.' "

Jessie had been impressed by her father's earnestness, and had really meant at the time to keep the promise of being more prompt and diligent. But habits, which, with older people, are like iron chains, almost impossible to be broken, are, even with children, fetters, slight at first, but becoming every day more strong. Jessie's chain was already too powerful for her own unassisted strength, and as she had not yet sought the aid which God will surely give to all who feel their weakness and come to him for help, she had gone on almost in the old way of yielding to every temptation to procrastination.

So her lessons for this Monday morning had been, as so often before, left till the short interval between breakfast and school. So much of

this time had been consumed by Jessie's farewells and last looks, that when she finally took out her books, less than half an hour remained in which to learn a column of definitions, a page of history, and some difficult questions in arithmetic. These last she abandoned in despair, after one glance, and hurriedly tried to fix her mind on the others, with an uneasy conviction that it was too late, which prevented her from remembering any thing. But she sat with her eyes upon the page until the latest moment which could make it possible for her to reach school in time. Then, snatching her hat, she ran off, rather wondering that her Aunt Maria, who was in the room, should not have advised her to hurry, as her mother always did. But she had not said a word, 'only, as Jessie went out, glancing at the clock, which pointed to five minutes of nine.

It was nearly five in the afternoon when Jessie returned. Throwing her books on the table, she was going away again, when her aunt, who was sewing as busily as she had been in the morning, looking up, said, "Jessie, I told

Jane to save you some dinner. You must be very hungry, for you forgot to take your luncheon."

"I don't want any dinner," said Jessie. "I have a headache."

"Stop," said her aunt, as Jessie again started from the door. "You must eat something. It's going without that makes your head ache, I dare say."

"No, it isn't, aunt," said Jessie. "I don't want any thing now."

"Sit down at the table," said her aunt, "and we'll see."

A very decided look and tone obliged Jessie to comply, though her head did really ache, and she was sure she could not touch a mouthful. Besides, she was afraid her aunt would see that she had been crying, and ask the reason. But her aunt made no remark, going out and herself bringing a plate of smoking steak and potatoes, a saucer of pudding, and a cup of tea. "There," she said, placing them before Jessie; "you need not eat more than you want; but, at any rate, drink the tea. I

always like a cup at dinner, and as there was some left, I heated it up for you. It's excellent for headache."

Whether it was the tea or not, Jessie's head soon felt better, and, tasting a morsel of steak, she concluded that she might as well go on, and so made a very good dinner. She had nearly finished the pudding, when her aunt remarked, "Your school does not let out very early, Jessie. Does it close at half-past four?"

Jessie coloured. "No, ma'am," she said, in a low voice; "at three."

"Oh!" said her aunt. "Is it a very long walk? But I suppose not, because I noticed that you had only five minutes this morning. Do you generally set out at that time?"

"Sometimes," said Jessie. "But I have to run."

"So I should think," said her aunt. "And you must be heated and very uncomfortable these warm mornings. Don't you think if you were to start earlier and walk moderately you would enjoy school better?"

"Enjoy school, Aunt Maria!" repeated Jes-

sie, in a tone of astonishment. "I don't believe any thing would make me do that."

"Then you haven't enjoyed it to-day?"

"No, indeed!" said Jessie. "It's a doleful place, I think."

"It's strange how people differ," said her aunt. "Do you remember Lucy Greene, Jessie? You saw her when you were at my house, didn't you? She lives a mile and a half from the school-house; but every day, storm or shine, there she goes trudging along. She never stays at home when she can help it, and says it's the most delightful place in the world. But then she always knows her lessons, and would think it a terrible disgrace to be kept in. And as to being late, she'd rather get up at three o'clock than not be in her seat when the bell rings."

Jessie's head sank lower and lower while her aunt was speaking, and finally rested on the table, very near the saucer. Fortunately the pudding was all gone. "I—I can't help it," she said, with a half-angry, half-ashamed sob. "I can't help it if I do miss my lessons and be late. It's *impossible* to help it."

“Well, then, don’t feel badly about it,” said her aunt. “As you can’t help it, it isn’t your fault. You have so much less time than anybody else, your lessons are so much more difficult than any one ever had to learn before, and you have such a want of mental faculties,—no comprehension, no reason, no memory,—”

Her aunt interrupted herself as Jessie raised her head and stared at her in astonishment. “Poor child!” she went on, as if to herself, but with a lurking smile; “she doesn’t even understand common language! It’s positive cruelty to send her to school!”

“I believe you are laughing at me, Aunt Maria,” said Jessie, with sudden enlightenment.

“I’m sympathizing with you,” said her aunt. “It must be so terrible to have all these lessons to learn, and to be obliged to be early at school, when it’s actually impossible to do so. It’s worse than slavery. But you are sure there is no mistake about it? It is really and truly ‘impossible?’”

“I wish you wouldn’t laugh at me,” said Jessie, putting her head down again. “Of

course I don't mean just 'impossible,' but—but——"

"And of course, my child," said her aunt, coming up, and passing her hand soothingly over Jessie's hair, "of course I know that it may be very difficult. But when a thing is not 'impossible,' there is no need to be discouraged. If you missed your lessons to-day, you can learn them better for to-morrow. You know the rule, 'Try, try again.' Are your lessons so very hard? Perhaps you are in a class too far advanced for your age."

"No, aunt," said Jessie, blushing. "All the girls are younger than I am, except Martha James, and she is as stupid as a goose. Miss Walton wouldn't let me go up into the next division when Katie Lansing and the others went, and I don't care now half so much whether I learn or not."

"That is a wrong feeling, Jessie. If you cannot learn what others of your age do, you should still try to do your best."

"But I could learn the lessons, I know," said Jessie. "They are not very much harder."

And Miss Walton said that—that it was partly for a punishment that she kept me back. I don't think she has any right to, at all. She's a cross old thing!"

"You have no right to speak in that way of your teacher, Jessie," said her aunt, gravely. "She knows better than you do where you ought to be placed. But if you can learn the more advanced lessons, and yet fail in the easy ones, don't you think you are to blame for not studying more diligently? Why don't you really try to learn, and please your teacher, and regain your right place in the school? I am sure it would be pleasanter, and you would feel happier for trying, even though you might not succeed. And I do not see why there need be any failure. Of course I was not speaking in earnest when I said that you had 'no reason or memory.' I was only showing you how foolishly you were talking, in saying that it was 'impossible' for you to learn. No, Jessie, it is not 'impossible,' for you have a mind, and every thing necessary to accomplish whatever God gives you to do in this world. He is not

a hard Master, such as the Israelites had in Egypt, when they were required to make bricks without straw, but a loving Father, who bestows on us wonderful powers of body and mind, and then requires of us but an easy, loving service."

"Jessie," continued her aunt, after a pause, "now that I have come to take charge of you for a while, I want to do the very best I can. That is what we all ought to do, you know, wherever we are. And I want to help you to do your very best also, and then I think we shall have a pleasant time together. And as we have begun to talk about this matter of school, which is a very important one to you, let us see if something cannot be done to make an improvement. Do you often fail as you did to-day?"

"Sometimes,—that is,—pretty often," said Jessie, colouring again.

"As often as once a week, for instance?"

"Oh, aunt, I don't call that often, at all!"

"Well, what is your idea of often, then? Not every day, surely?"

"I don't miss three or four lessons every day," began Jessie, but stopped short at sight of her aunt's look of horrified amazement and uplifted hands. "Oh, no, not so often as that!" she went on, in some confusion and with a very red face. "And, any way, I can't help—at least, I mean I have tried to learn them better, and somehow I can't."

"Perhaps you have not tried in the right way," said her aunt. "You know there is a right way and a wrong way for every thing. When do you study? At home, I mean."

"Oh, any time," said Jessie.

"And how long?"

"I don't know, exactly. Miss Walton said an hour; but I guess—I'm pretty sure—I don't always study as long as that, for I never have time."

"Could you learn them in an hour?"

"Yes, if they were not very long."

"Then, to make sure, after this you had better take half an hour more."

"What! an hour and a half!" exclaimed Jessie. "Why, I don't have time for any

thing hardly! I don't want to study every minute!"

"If your school closes at three, you ought to be at home by half-past," continued her aunt, taking no notice of her remarks. "There will be three hours before tea-time, at half-past six. Directly after tea you can take your lessons, and——"

"Oh, Aunt Maria!" interrupted Jessie; "right after tea is the pleasantest time of the whole day! I don't want to study then. Why can't I wait till dark?"

"Study an hour and a half," went on Aunt Maria, as if Jessie had not spoken. "Now we have disposed of the lessons. What is the next difficulty about school? Oh, the being late. That is easily remedied. You have only to get up early——"

"But that is just what I never can do," again broke in Jessie. "I've tried and tried, but it's no use. I always go to sleep again after I'm called."

"I'll see to that," said her aunt, with a smile. "You must get up at six. That will give you

plenty of time for all you have to do before coming down-stairs. And as we shall have breakfast at seven, precisely, there will be at least an hour afterwards, during which you must put your room in order and give your bird seed and water. There will still be time, if you are prompt, to look over your lessons and get ready for school. You must set out punctually at half-past eight, and then you will reach school without exhausting yourself by running, and will be in a condition to begin the day there aright."

"But, Aunt Maria," said Jessie, who had been waiting impatiently to speak, "I can't do every thing at just such a minute. I never could. I don't like to be so precise. Nobody is but old mai——!"

Jessie checked herself, and looked apprehensively at her aunt, who coloured a little, but laughed, and said, "You need not be afraid to say it, Jessie. You think nobody is particular except 'old maids'? Well, in my opinion the world would be better if it followed their example, then, for little can be accomplished

without regularity and system. Of course, sometimes there must be interruptions, but in general it is a good rule. At any rate, you will have an opportunity to try it and see. So remember, an hour and a half directly after tea for your lessons; rise at six, and leave for school at half-past eight. For a morning or two I will send Jane to summon you; after that I expect that you will arouse yourself."

"I know I shan't," said Jessie. "And I don't like so many rules. I don't believe it will make any difference."

"Jessie, how old are you?"

"Thirteen next birthday, the twenty-fourth of May," replied Jessie. "Why, aunt?"

"Then you are certainly old enough to have some sense, and not talk like a baby. At any rate, sense or not, you must do as I say. So let me hear no more objections. As soon as tea is over, take your books."

"Must I begin this very night?" ventured Jessie, though somewhat awed by her aunt's air of determination and impressive tone. "Katie Lansing is coming to take me for a drive in

her pony carriage, and I couldn't go on Saturday. Please let me wait till I come back, Aunt Maria, just this one night."

"Jessie, I shall certainly be out of patience with you before long," said her aunt, rising. "Once for all, I tell you that teasing will never avail any thing with me. What I say I mean. I am sorry you cannot go to ride, but very likely your friend will take you some other time. At all events, you can go nowhere from seven till half-past eight."

"Cross old thing!" muttered Jessie, as her aunt left the room. "I knew I shouldn't like her a bit. I've half a mind to say I *will* go in spite of her! Such a lovely afternoon, too! and I dare say Katie can't go again for ever so long. It's too bad! I wish mother was home, and then I shouldn't have to study, except just when I chose. As if it made any difference! But I suppose I'll have to do it, for father wouldn't like it if I made any fuss with Aunt Maria. Only I do wish she wasn't so terribly particular. I know I shall have a miserable time, and not enjoy myself at all."


With a mind quite made up on that point, Jessie walked out into the garden. It was, as she had said, a "lovely afternoon;" and, somehow, the bright sunlight and the merry songs of the bluebirds and robins seemed to charm away her bad feelings, and before long she found herself able to once more "enjoy" a race with Lion, who came wagging his tail and bounding away in challenge. The romp did her good, and she did not feel so very miserable when, after tea, the books were produced; though a few angry tears would come when she was not even allowed to go for one moment to speak to Katie. There must be no interruptions, her aunt declared, and went herself to the door. Jessie eagerly inquired what her friend had said; but her aunt would give her no satisfaction then. "When your lessons are over you shall know all about it. But now you must think of nothing but your books." And Jessie, after one or two more questions, which met with no reply, finding that there was no help for it, began to study in earnest. Before the hour and a half had entirely expired,

she had the satisfaction of reciting her lessons perfectly.

“I think you will have no trouble with those to-morrow,” said her aunt, as she gave back the books; “and I hope there’s nothing to prevent the drive which I have promised you shall take with your friend Katie at five o’clock. But remember, Jessie, your rule must be, ‘Business first, pleasure afterwards.’”

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW LEAF.

RECISELY at six the next morning, Jane's rat-tat-tat might almost have waked "The Sleeping Beauty,"—so Jessie complained when she heard it. She half unclosed her eyes, murmured drowsily, "Yes, I hear," and immediately shut them again. Jane waited an instant, then rapped louder than before. "Oh, dear me!" cried Jessie. "Do go away! I'll get up in a minute."

"But your aunt said I was not to go till I had seen you out of bed," replied Jane, coming in. "I think a little 'cold pig' will do you good, miss. That's what I used to get for being too sleepy in the morning."

Jessie sprang up, half angrily, as a sprinkle of water came on her face. But it was impossible to be angry with good-natured Jane, and

the threatened quarrel was turned into a frolic, which, however, only lasted till, being quite sure that Jessie was too thoroughly awake to think of going to sleep again, Jane ran off to her work, declaring that "Miss Maria would give her a terrible scolding if breakfast wasn't ready to the minute," and that "they must all 'mind their P's and Q's' now."

"Well, if Aunt Maria did make me get up before I wanted to, I believe it's pleasanter than to lie in bed," thought Jessie, as she paused a few moments to look at the birds, who were nearly splitting their little throats with their joyous songs. "How beautiful it is out of doors! It would be splendid for a walk. There's Sam harnessing Prince! I shouldn't wonder if he were going to the mill. I'll hurry and get dressed, and may-be I can go with him. He'll be back before seven, and I've nothing to do till then."

A very hasty dressing would answer for the present, Jessie thought. There would be time enough when she came back to make all right for breakfast. She was in fear lest she should

not catch Sam, who, as she looked again, seemed quite ready, and, running down quickly, she was barely in time to make him hear her call.

"Seems to me you're out early, miss," said Sam, smiling all over his cheerful black face, as he helped her into the wagon. "I don't remember that ever I had the pleasure of your company to mill before."

"I got up early," said Jessie, "and I thought I'd go. It's nice to ride in the morning, isn't it, Sam?"

"First-rate, miss," returned Sam. "It makes you feel lively like."

He gave a chirrup to Prince, who dashed off as if he, too, felt the influence of the fresh air and bright sunshine. The mill was reached quite too soon for Jessie, who would have liked a drive of five miles, at least. Sam went in for his flour, and Jessie, jumping out, amused herself with throwing stones into the sparkling stream, and watching the little fishes, which were darting hither and thither, as if wild with delight.

She was not ready to go when Sam was, and

he waited a few moments; but hearing the miller say that it was 'almost seven o'clock,' suddenly reminded her of her breakfast and of her aunt's punctuality.

"Do drive faster, Sam," she urged, when they had set out again. "I'm afraid I shall be late. Prince does go so slowly!"

"I thought you wasn't in a hurry, miss," said Sam, "you stayed so long there by the water. I'll drive as fast as I can, but it's uphill now."

The clock struck as Jessie entered the dining-room, whither she rushed without a thought of her appearance. Relieved to find that she was, after all, in season, and suddenly feeling very hungry at sight of her favourite dishes of fried fish and muffins, which Jane was just placing on the table, where her aunt was already seated, Jessie hastily took her own chair, not seeing, or not heeding, a comical look which Jane gave her as she left the room. Nor did Jessie notice the half-amused, half-displeased glance of her aunt. She was waiting rather impatiently for the blessing to be asked, and as soon as it was

over, held out her plate, saying, "Please give me some breakfast, right away, Aunt Maria! I'm half starved! And I like getting up early ever so much! I've had a splendid time! I've been down to the mill. And—but why don't you give me some fish, aunt, and what are you laughing at?"

"Oh, Jessie," said her aunt, who seemed trying to be grave, but who broke into a laugh at the question, "what have you been doing? Taking a mud bath? Go look in the glass."

Jessie laughed herself as she saw three or four long streaks on her face. "Why, how did those come there? Oh, I know. I got my fingers muddy, and I had to keep pushing back my hair, for it would fall in my eyes."

"Why didn't you tie it with a ribbon, as usual? And, Jessie, what a figure you are altogether!" said her aunt, with no smile now, as she looked at her,—“your hair flying in all directions, no collar, fingers covered with mud. I'm astonished at your coming to the table in such a condition! Go directly and dress yourself properly. If this is the result of

your getting up early, you might as well lie in bed."

It was no new thing for Jessie to be sent from the breakfast-table to complete a too hasty toilet. Her father was in this respect as exacting as his sister, and Jessie had not unfrequently lost her breakfast entirely for no greater want of propriety than this. She was in some trepidation now lest her aunt should adopt the same plan, which she would by no means like, as the fresh air had given her an unusual appetite. She tried to be quick, but every thing seemed to combine to detain her. Her curls had become tangled, her brush dropped behind the bureau, she could find no pins for her collar, and when at length nothing was longer out of order, so much time had passed that she was sure Aunt Maria would have finished and she would lose her breakfast.

But her aunt was still at the table. "Well, you look more like a civilized child again," she remarked, as Jessie entered. "I hope I shall see no more such untidiness. You had time enough, surely, this morning."

"Yes, aunt; but I wanted to go out, it was so pleasant, and then I forgot that I hadn't finished dressing. But I'll remember next time."

"You must not go away again before breakfast," said her aunt. "But eat your fish now. It is cold, I suppose; but that is your own fault."

"I don't mind it's being cold," said Jessie, as she gladly obeyed. "I'm so hungry, I think I could eat nails, like the ostriches. I was afraid you'd make me go without any thing."

She looked up archly at her aunt, who smiled, but shook her head, saying, "You know very well you deserve to go without. I advise you not to try me again. So you rather like getting up early, Jessie, though you do come near losing your breakfast?"

"I like going out," said Jessie. "Can't I ever go any more?"

"I have no objection to your going in the garden. You must not go where you will not hear the bell. And there must be no more such hurrying down that you cannot take time to

dress properly. There are other duties, too, which I am afraid you sadly neglect. Did you open your Bible this morning before you came down?"

"I didn't think of it," answered Jessie, colouring, as she so often had to do at her aunt's troublesome questions. "I never can read in the morning, because I don't have time. But I know I ought," she went on quickly, fearing a reproof, "and I really will now that I'm going to get up early."

"I hope so," said her aunt, rising as she spoke.

"Oh, dear!" said Jessie, reluctantly rising also, "it's half-past seven, and I haven't had half enough. Must I stop now, Aunt Maria? You said that was the time for breakfast to be over, but I do want another muffin."

"For this once," said her aunt, smiling, "as you are so very hungry, you may go over the time. But after this we must keep strictly to rules and regulations. Don't forget what you have to do before school, and be sure to set out at exactly half-past eight."

"How tiresome!" was Jessie's first thought. "Three whole weeks of rules and regulations! Aunt Maria is so cross! No, not precisely cross, either," she went on: "she's pleasant sometimes, and I love to see her smile. It was good of her to let me have my breakfast. I didn't expect it. I know father would have said 'no.' May-be I'll like her some, after all."

Jessie entered the academy that morning in company with her friend Katie, and two or three others well known as punctual and diligent scholars, and meeting Mr. Howland, the principal, in the hall, was included in his pleasant commendation, "Ah, bright and early, girls! That is making a good beginning, and I am sure, from your cheerful faces, that you are well prepared with your lessons. Am I not right?" he asked, smilingly.

His glance rested on Jessie, and very glad was she to be able to respond, "Yes, sir, I know mine."

"I thought so," he said, as he went on. "Early girls are always good scholars."

"I do know my lessons, girls," said Jessie,

as she noticed a doubtful look which passed between two of her companions. "I hope you don't think I would tell Mr. Howland a story. I do know them, every word."

"Well, it's a wonder then!" said the one who had looked the most incredulous. "You must have turned over a new leaf, and very suddenly too, for only yesterday my sister Fanny was telling how many times you had been kept in lately. I suppose you are afraid of being expelled. I'm sure I should think you would be."

"No, I'm not in the least afraid of it, Maggie Hollis," retorted Jessie. "And I think you're very unkind——"

"Never mind, Jessie, interrupted Katie, drawing her away. "I don't think Maggie meant to be unkind," she said, as the others walked on; "only she was a little surprised, you know, because you have missed a good deal lately."

"Well, she needn't speak in that way, as if I never knew anything. I dare say she misses herself sometimes."

“Oh, no, she don’t,” said Katie. “She’s a splendid scholar. She’s in the ‘Roll of Honour’ every month. But come, Jessie, let’s make sure of our own lessons. For if we know them ever so well, it can’t do any harm to look them over a little.”

As the day went on, Jessie, in place of her usual uncomfortable feeling in the classes, and ardent hopes that some very easy question would fall to her, now held up her head with a proud satisfaction that she knew every answer, even the longest. And, after gaining one or two minor promotions, she finally walked triumphantly to the head of the very class in which, not only yesterday, but for many days back, she had made disgraceful failures. It certainly was much nicer to be at the head than the foot; and as Jessie met her teacher’s look of surprised pleasure, she then and there resolved that she would turn over a new leaf in earnest, and show them all that she was not such a stupid goose as she had seemed.

Katie highly approved of this determination, communicated as they walked home together,—

a very unusual occurrence. "Its a great deal better to learn lessons thoroughly," she said, "for if you don't, you have all the trouble over again, and disgrace besides. After all, I guess you are glad your aunt made you stay home and study last night, instead of going out."

"Yes," said Jessie, "I shouldn't have known my lessons, I'm afraid, if she hadn't. And we can go to-day. Be sure to come at five o'clock, Katie, so that we can have a good long drive. I must be back at tea-time. Aunt Maria is so particular, you know."

"Yes, I'll certainly be there. I'll ask mother to let me wear my watch, and then I can come to the minute. Mind you're ready yourself, for *sometimes* you're late, you know!"

Katie ran off with a laugh, and Jessie entered the house with a step and look quite different from that of the day before.

"Ah, Jessie!" said her aunt, "no keeping in to-day? How's that?"

"I'm never going to be kept in again," said Jessie. "It's a great deal pleasanter to learn my lessons well. What do you think, Aunt

Maria? I got head in the arithmetic class, and there are thirty-five girls in it!"

"I am very glad to hear it," said her aunt, looking pleased. "School was not so disagreeable, then, as usual, to-day?"

"Oh, no; I like it now. I do believe your rule is best, after all, Aunt Maria. That one about 'business and pleasure,' I mean, for if I had taken my 'pleasure' first last night, I don't believe I would have had half such a good time as I'll have by-and-by, and I wouldn't have known my lessons either."

"'Business first, pleasure afterwards,' is a very good rule," said her aunt. "I'm glad you have found it out so soon. If you keep to it, you won't have much trouble with school or anything else."

"I mean to," said Jessie. "I'm going to turn over a new leaf! I wonder," she continued, after a little more talking, "what I can do till five o'clock. If Willie were home I'd play with him. But I havn't got any thing to do. I wish it was five o'clock now."

Jessie was not accustomed to so much extra

time, and there seemed some danger of its hanging heavily on her hands.

“I shall have something for you to do by-and-by,” said her aunt. “You had better go now and amuse yourself, as you have been so industrious all day. Haven’t you a doll?”

“A doll, aunt! when I’m almost thirteen—at least past twelve! I gave up dolls most two years ago, when Willie was born. Dear little fellow! I wish he was here now. Then I’d know what to do.”

“Well, go and play at something,” said her aunt. “And come to me at a quarter-past four, and I will help you to pass the time till Katie arrives.”

“Must I come at *exactly* a quarter-past four, aunt?” asked Jessie, with an arch look, and a smile.

“Exactly!” replied her aunt, returning the smile. “Not a minute after. Remember the ‘rules and regulations.’”

“Well, I’ll come,” said Jessie. “It’s only half-past three now. What will I do till then? Oh, I know! I’ll go and see Jane.”

Jane was baking pies, had been belated, was extremely busy, and not over glad to see her visitor, as she knew that she would immediately insist upon "helping," as Jessie called it. Jane's own word was "bothering." However, as she was very fond of Jessie, and never denied her anything, some paste and a rolling-pin were forthcoming, as usual, and Jessie was soon as busy as a bee.

This kind of work was quite to her taste, and in the delights of rolling out crust she forgot how time was passing, till, happening to look up, she saw the hands pointing to the quarter-past four, at which time she had been desired to return.

"Oh, how very provoking!" she exclaimed, "when my pie isn't ready yet! I wonder if Aunt Maria wouldn't let me stay two or three minutes longer? I've only a little more to do."

"I wouldn't stop, if I were you," said Jane. "Miss Maria won't like it, I know."

"I'll run and ask her," said Jessie.

Aunt Maria shook her head decidedly. "No, no," she said, as Jessie urged that she

would be gone but a minute. "If you stay one minute to-day, you will want to stay ten to-morrow. Run and wash your hands, and come back to the sewing I have got ready for you."

"Oh, sewing, aunt!" said Jessie, with a long face. "I don't like that at all. I thought you would have something nice for me to do."

"Don't stop now to talk about it," said her aunt. "You have wasted nearly five minutes already."

Jessie's face grew still longer when she recognized in the work her aunt gave her one of the three aprons which had been for so many days a source of trouble between herself and her mother. "Oh, I never can do this, Aunt Maria!" she declared. "It's so hard to keep the hems straight, and there are ruffles and lots of ugly things. I told mother I couldn't do them, and she said I might wait a while."

"What good will that do?" asked her aunt. "Will the ruffles be any easier next week? Come, come, begin at once, Jessie. I told your mother I'd see that all three of the aprons were

finished before she came back, and I mean to keep my word."

"And have I got to do them all myself?" asked Jessie.

"Certainly ! A girl of twelve ought to think nothing of two or three aprons. Why, when I was your age I used to make all my own under-clothing, and help with my dresses."

"Oh, well, I suppose you liked to sew," said Jessie. "I don't."

"I was not particularly fond of it," replied her aunt. "But I was taught that it was my duty to help my mother, and learn to be useful."

Jessie blushed a little at this, and was silent. Presently her aunt asked if she would like to hear something of the time when her father was a boy. Jessie, always ready for a story, eagerly answered "yes," and, in listening, she almost lost sight of the difficulties attending the hem, which twice before had been given up in despair.

"Why, I've nearly finished it!" she exclaimed, as the tale drew to a close. "I don't

believe I should mind sewing every day, after all, aunt, if you'll only tell me a story !”

“I can't promise that,” said her aunt. “But your work itself will soon be pleasant to you, I've no doubt, if you try to do it cheerfully and well. Children, and grown people too, make a great mistake when they set about any thing grumblingly and perform it carelessly. They lose two great pleasures,—the satisfaction of seeing good workmanship, and the approval of conscience. Do you know what I mean, Jessie ?”

“Oh, yes, I know what approval of conscience is. It's what makes us feel happy when we do right.”

“Yes ; it is the voice of God within us, telling us that he is pleased with our conduct ; and we can never be truly happy without it. Now, Jessie, is that the final stitch ? Your work is very nicely done, and you may fold it now and lay it away in your basket.”

The clock struck five as Aunt Maria spoke, and Jessie gladly jumped up. “At last I can take my long put-off drive !” she said. “But I

must hurry, or Katie will be here before I'm ready."

"Suppose I should say that you had better wait till to-morrow for your drive?" said her aunt.

"Oh, why?" cried Jessie. "You are not in earnest, aunt, for I see you smile," continued Jessie, with an air of relief. "I don't want to wait. It's been put off twice already."

"But I thought you always liked to 'put off' things? You wanted to 'put off' your lessons last night, your sewing this afternoon——"

"Ah!" interrupted Jessie, "but those were disagreeable things! If every thing was pleasant, like going to ride, I'd always do it right away. But I know I ought to," she continued, "whether things are pleasant or not. And I'm really going to after this, because I never feel happy when I don't."


"And as I wish very much to see you always happy, I shall try to help you to keep that resolution," said her aunt, kissing her. "Now run off, my dear, and have a good time. I hear Katie driving up. You may ask her to

come back to tea, if you like. Be sure to be home by half-past six."

"I *do* like Aunt Maria, if she is particular," said Jessie to herself, as she hastened out of the room. "My mind is quite made up about it!"

CHAPTER V.

WISE AND FOOLISH.

ORMING good resolutions and putting them into practice are too very different things, as Jessie had already discovered for herself; and if it had not been for Aunt Maria's promised assistance, her plan of 'turning over a new leaf' about school might very soon have shared the fate of many resolves which had gone before it. Not that Jessie was disposed to change her mind as to the good effects produced. While at school, it was as pleasant as at first to feel confident that no disgrace hung over her head; but at home, when the time came for the preparation for this pleasant result, she was yet foolish enough sometimes to think that another time would do just as well, and to wish to read, or play, or do any thing rather than work.

Fortunately, the "rules and regulations" prevented this. She was obliged to study, whether inclined or not, and Friday afternoon found her not only still first in one class, but not far from that desirable post in all the others. Since Monday not one failure had been recorded. Nor had she once missed being in her place when school opened.

The change was of course noticed by her companions. Some of them unkindly laughed at the "wonderful reformation," as they called it, and predicted that it would not last long. But all the best girls were glad that she was trying to improve. Katie Lansing, in particular, took her part with great energy. Katie's opinions had much weight with her school-mates. Judge Lansing was the richest man in the village, and Katie herself the admired, almost envied, possessor of numerous treasures, including a pony carriage and two gold watches. These last, it is true, which had been given her by fond uncles, were not often seen, as Katie was too young to wear them. But they were her very own, for all that; and as to books and

toys of the most expensive kinds, there fairly seemed no end, her friends thought, to Katie's possessions. Being, in addition to all these gifts, blessed with the far more valuable one of wise and Christian parents, who had taught her not to attach too much importance to any merely earthly treasures, Katie was not in the least "set up" by her grandeur. A simple, warm-hearted child, she shared her good things liberally, and was a universal favourite. So, when she declared that "Jessie Burton was not a bit stupid, if she *had* been kept back when the rest were advanced, and that she would turn out one of the best scholars in the academy yet," nearly every one was ready to agree with her.

Miss Walton, Jessie's teacher, had long known that she was quite capable of taking a higher place in the school. Like the rest, she was surprised at her unusual perseverance; but, anxious that it should continue, she praised and encouraged her, and promised that a few weeks of such diligence should not fail to bring the promotion so much wished for.

She had talked to her very kindly for a few moments after school was dismissed, and Jessie left her feeling that, though the promotion would be in other respects delightful, she was not at all sure that she should like going away from Miss Walton, who was not in the least "cross," now that the lessons were well said and no saucy replies given.

Jessie's conscience had always reproached her for these same saucy replies. She did not mean to be impertinent or disrespectful, but irritation at being reproved had often caused conduct of which she was secretly ashamed at the time, and still more now. "I will never vex Miss Walton again," she thought, as she collected her books. "She is as good as she can be now. And I'm going to try ever so hard next week. Then I'll have a perfect report at the end, instead of having all these bad marks that I got on Monday." She was looking at the diary which she was required to keep, and which was once a week sent home for examination. Monday's record was certainly a sad drawback to its appearance. But

when Jessie compared that of the remainder of the week with many pages disfigured by ugly black lines showing complete failure, she was quite satisfied that she had made a good beginning. At that moment it seemed an easy thing to go on. "I don't see why I can't even get into the 'Roll of Honour,'" she thought. "It isn't so very long to try. Only a month. And father would be so pleased. May-be he'd get me that pony I've teased him for so long. I'll certainly try. I suppose I can't get one of the prizes now, for school is only six weeks longer. But the 'Roll of Honour' I *will* try for."

The 'Roll of Honour' was a list of names of scholars who had been perfect for a month. It was considered very high distinction to be included in this list. Jessie had often wished that her name might appear there, and had even gone so far as to make one or two attempts to that end. They had all, of course, failed. But she took fresh courage, now that four days of success had actually passed.

She went home full of enthusiasm.

"There is only one reason why you should

not prosper in your plans," said her aunt, after listening to Jessie's eager speech. "Only one reason. You can learn readily enough, as I told you, but you must take care that your bad habit does not interfere, as it so often does, to prevent your designs from being carried out.

"My bad habit? Oh, you mean putting off things, I suppose," said Jessie. "But I can't put off my lessons any more, for you won't let me. And you're going to stay two weeks longer. Then there will only be a week more, and two or three days. Oh, I'm pretty sure of getting in this time!"

"Well, I shall be very glad if you do," said her aunt. "You must send me word of your success, for I shall wish to tell it to all my friends."

"Yes, I will," said Jessie. "Good-by! old books," she continued, throwing them on a shelf in the closet. "Good-by till to-morrow, at any rate."

"Then you are not going to study to-night?" asked her aunt.

"Why, it's Friday!" said Jessie. "I never

study on Fridays. I always wait until Saturday."

Till Monday, Jessie might have said, with more truth, for Saturday's duties and amusements seldom left time for lessons. She was going out of the room, when a look on her aunt's face, which she did not understand, made her stop. "Do you want me to study to-night, Aunt Maria? I thought you wouldn't care, for to-morrow will do just as well; won't it?"

"Perhaps so," answered her aunt.

"Then I needn't? Please don't say I must, for I've got a book that I borrowed, and I want to read it, for I must return it soon."

"Why not read this afternoon?"

"Yes, I'm going to; but I shan't finish it by tea-time. Oh, Aunt Maria, don't say I must study to-night!"

"I don't say you *must*, Jessie. But I *advise* you to study this evening, as usual, instead of waiting till to-morrow."

"Why, aunt?"

"Never mind why. Or if you want a reason take this,—

“‘What you’ve to do, get done to-day,
And do not till to-morrow stay;
‘There’s always danger in delay.’”

“Oh, that old verse!” said Jessie, laughing. “Father’s always saying it. I thought may-be you meant something particular. There’s no danger, aunt. I’ll study to-morrow, sure and certain.”

There was still a look that puzzled Jessie. It was not displeasure, she thought, but after asking two or three questions, which brought no satisfactory answers, she gave it up and went away, concluding that perhaps it was not quite polite to reject her aunt’s advice, and that that must be the reason of her looking so queer. “I don’t want to be impolite,” she continued, to herself; “but I don’t like that kind of advice, and I don’t see what difference it can make.”

Not quite at ease, Jessie betook herself to the summer-house, her favourite resort when she had a nice book. The afternoon was entirely at her own disposal, for as she had been very diligent, and finished one apron the day before,

her aunt had delighted her by saying that no more sewing need be done till the next week. So, dismissing the thought of lessons for the present, at any rate, Jessie gave herself up to the enjoyment of her book.

It proved to have but one fault: it was too short. It came to an end as the bell rang for tea. Jessie went into the house just in time to escape a shower, which she had not noticed approaching. "I wish it didn't rain," she said, as she took her seat at the table. "I might have gone out to walk, for I've finished my story, and now I'll have nothing to do after tea."

"I think it will be only a shower," said her aunt, "and it will lay the dust nicely."

"Yes; but it will be too wet to go out. I wish I had something pleasant to do."

Nothing very agreeable presented itself, and Jessie, after lingering for a few moments at the window to watch the clouds now breaking away in the west, and promising a fair day for the morrow, suddenly resolved to get her books and study. "I've nothing else to do, aunt,"

she said, "and something *might* happen to-morrow, you know, to prevent. I really want to make sure, because of the 'Roll of Honour.'"

"I think you are very wise," replied her aunt, with a smile. "I am quite ready to help you, as usual."

As Jessie was about going to bed that night, she suddenly stopped. "Oh, aunt, there is one thing I want to ask you. Need I get up at six o'clock to-morrow morning, as I have all the week?"

"Why not?" asked her aunt. "I thought you liked to get up?"

"Oh, no," said Jessie. "I am so sleepy in the mornings, and I shan't have to go to school. Won't you please have breakfast later than seven?"

"No," said her aunt. "But you may do as you choose about getting up."

"But will I have to go without my breakfast if I am not down in time?"

"No; but I advise you to get up as usual."

"Oh, aunt, I don't like to have you say that! It makes me feel as if I ought to do

things. And I don't want to hurry up *every* morning. Would you be angry if I didn't take your advice?"

"No," said her aunt, for the third time "But still I advise——"

"I won't listen," said Jessie, laughing and stopping her ears, as she ran off. "I mean to have a real good nap, to pay for getting up early so long."

There was no summons from Jane the next morning. It was hardly necessary now, as Jessie had for two days awoke at the sound of six from the tall old clock in the hall, which certainly struck loudly enough to arouse any ordinary sleeper. Jessie's eyes unclosed before the last peal had died away. Her first thought was, "Aunt Maria said I need not get up;" her second, before she could settle herself comfortably for another nap, was the remembrance, "I advise you to get up at the usual time." In spite of herself, the words would be repeated over and over. "I wonder why she said that?" Jessie asked, mentally, as, thoroughly awake, she lay staring at the sunlight which came

pouring in, and watching a long cobweb which dangled from the ceiling.

The cobweb reminded Jessie that this was her sweeping day. Then she recalled last Saturday's adventures. "I hope to-day won't be as unlucky as that was!" she thought. "I lost my ride in the morning, Katie's book was spoiled, I couldn't go out to walk nor to ride afterwards. And then my parasol. I lost that, too, that day. I do think it was too bad of mother to tell father all about it, when Katie said I needn't get her another book. Mother might have made up her mind herself. Of course father said I must go without the parasol. Yes, that was really an unlucky day. I remember I didn't get up till half-past eight that morning, because I was so sleepy. I wonder whether that had any thing to do with my having all those troubles? I don't see how it could," reflected Jessie. "But I believe I'll get up now," she added, "for somehow it seems as though I ought to. Aunt Maria advised me to. I wonder if there was any reason? I wish now I'd got up at exactly six."

To Jessie's surprise, her meditation had lasted only five minutes, and there was abundance of time yet to prepare for breakfast.

"Ah, Jessie!" said her aunt, looking very much pleased as Jessie walked into the dining-room at the usual hour, "you have made another wise choice, I see! I really begin to have some hopes of you, and I congratulate you on twice getting the better of your bad habit."

"'Congratulate,' aunt? What is that?"

"It means to wish a person joy, or to express one's own pleasure at another's success or happiness. So I 'congratulate' you on your success in overcoming your propensity to lie in bed of a morning. I am very glad to see you down."

"You advised me to get up, aunt, and I thought something bad might happen if I didn't. Would it if I hadn't?"

"Would it if I hadn't!" repeated her aunt, laughing. "I'm afraid your teacher would think that rather bad grammar. A curiously-constructed sentence, at all events. I suppose you mean, would any bad result have come from your lying in bed till eight or nine o'clock?"

You may judge for yourself. I am going to spend the day at your Uncle John's, and I invite you to go with me. But your work must all be done first. I shall leave at ten o'clock, exactly, without waiting for anybody. So——"

"Oh, I see, aunt!" interrupted Jessie. "If I hadn't got up, may-be I couldn't have finished my sweeping in time. But I can now. Oh, I'm very glad I didn't go to sleep again! I haven't been to Uncle John's for a long time. I haven't seen the new baby yet. And the farm will be lovely now. Oh, I'm so glad I can go! And will you stay all day?"

"As your lessons are out of the way, there will be nothing to prevent us from remaining to tea, and coming back by moonlight."

"Oh, aunt! and was that the reason you advised me to study last night? I am very glad I did, for we should have had to come home so very early if I'd had to study at seven. But now we can stay as long as we choose. I'm very glad!" repeated Jessie. "Aunt Maria, you are really right about 'business first.' It makes the 'pleasure' seem so much more if all

the 'business' is done first, don't it? I'm very glad I took your advice. I was wise, wasn't I, aunt? I have learned a great deal of wisdom from experience, haven't I? You know you said the other day you hoped I would. I like taking advice better than having to obey 'rules.' And I wish you wouldn't have any more 'rules' at all, aunt, but just give me advice, and see if I don't get along just as well. Won't you?"

"But if you don't take the advice, I can't promise to excuse you from the consequences. If I should advise you to be ready at ten o'clock, I shall not wait if you are not."

"Oh, but I'll take the advice, aunt, and be ready, for I want to go so much. If I was wise enough to do what you thought best, when I didn't know the reason, I'd be very foolish indeed not to do it now that I do know why. Shouldn't I, aunt?"

"I think you would. Where are you going now? To do your sweeping, and make sure of it?"

"Why, no, aunt," said Jessie, pausing. "I'm going to take a few runs first with Lion.

There's no hurry about the sweeping. I've got more than two hours before ten o'clock. There'll be plenty of time to have a little fun first."

"Business first," began Aunt Maria.

"Oh, we're not to have any more 'rules,' you know," interrupted Jessie, laughing. "And I'm so tired of that one! But you may give me some 'advice.'—'advice' that I must take some exercise in the open air. The doctor said once that was good for me. It was when I had been sick, and I've always done it ever since. And see how well I am; so it's a good thing to do, aunt: and don't you think you'd better advise it?"

Her aunt laughed. "There's not much need of such 'advice,' I think. But perhaps I had better advise you not to stay very long, if you will go, for fear——"

"No fear, aunt," said Jessie. "I'm not going to be foolish enough to lose my ride. You'll see. Now for a race with Lion! I'm so full of spirits that I shall do some damage if I don't let 'em off somehow. But I'll be back

time enough. I like 'advice' ever so much better than those old 'rules!'

"Miss Jessie," said Jane, a few moments after the clock had struck for the second time since breakfast, "haven't you got to sweep your room before you can go with your aunt? I thought I heard her say so."

"Yes," said Jessie, not paying much attention, and without raising her eyes from the book which she was a second time reading.

"Why don't you go and do it, then?" said Jane. "It's after nine o'——"

"After nine!" repeated Jessie, starting up. "Why, I thought that was only eight! I'm sure I wouldn't have stopped to read, only I thought there was plenty of time. Well, I'll go just as soon as I've finished this chapter. It'll only take a minute."

"You'd better go now," said Jane. "As it is, you'll have to work pretty spry to get through, for Miss Maria won't let you off with two or three brushes in the middle of the room, like you do sometimes."

"No; I dare say she'll want every inch of

the carpet swept half a dozen times," said Jessie, closing her book. "She's so very particular! I might as well go and do it, I suppose, though I do wish *you* would, just for once, Jane. Won't you, there's a real good old Jane? I do hate it so!"

"Oh, I haven't got time," said Jane. "And you haven't not much time either. So you'd better be quick, if you don't want to get left."

"That's the very reason I want you to help me," said Jessie. "I'm afraid I'll be left. I didn't think it was so late. And I must get dressed and all. Please help me, Jane."

"May-be I'll come and help you to get dressed," said Jane, who never could withstand Jessie's coaxings. "But I haven't time for the sweeping. Besides, your aunt wouldn't like it. Now do hurry, Miss Jessie, or you'll never get through by ten o'clock. Sec, it's almost a quarter-past nine now."

Roused at last to a sense that she really had no time to lose, Jessie seized the broom which Jane put into her hands, and ran up to her work. With her utmost haste, and consider-

ably less "being particular" than Aunt Maria would have thought quite necessary, her task was not finished in less than half-an-hour. To get dressed in fifteen minutes took both Jessie's and Jane's greatest rapidity. Aunt Maria was heard to go down before the last button was fastened; and without waiting to put on the final attire of hat and sacque, Jessie snatched them, and rushed down, the first stroke of ten sounding from the deliberate old clock as she reached the foot of the stairs. Dashing out of the door, she stumbled over her shoe-string, left untied, and fell, to the great peril of her white dress, to say nothing of a bruise on her arm. But as the dress, fortunately, was not much soiled, Jessie rushed on, not minding the bruise, in her anxiety to overtake the carriage, already in the street. Sam was obliged to stop to close the gates, and Jessie came panting up. She could not speak, but, catching hold of the side of the carriage, looked up imploringly.

Miss Burton took out her watch, and shook her head. "It is after ten, Jessie, and you are not ready. Drive on, Sam."

"Oh, but, aunt,—” said Jessie, bursting into tears. She was too much out of breath to say more.

"There's the town clock just striking now, Miss Maria,” said Sam, very sorry for Jessie's disappointment. "It's right, I'm pretty sure. Our clocks are all fast.”

Jessie looked up again, with a revival of hope. She had been struggling to get her sacque on. In her frantic efforts, one sleeve had got turned half wrong side out, and utterly refused to permit the hand to come out. She gave it a hasty fastening; Sam, at the same moment, in his good-natured wish to assist, pushing her hat down over her eyes, wrong side before, the long ends of ribbon completely blinding her. "Now—I'm—ready,—” gasped Jessie, and Sam, taking advantage of Miss Maria's inability to forbid him (for this last appeal had overcome her, and she was leaning back and laughing heartily), lifted Jessie in, pulled to the gate in a twinkling, and drove off before Aunt Maria could compose her face to look grave again.


Presently Sam looked around from the front seat, a little scared at his own boldness; but though Miss Maria shook her head, and said, very gravely, "I can't have you interfering in this way, Sam," he saw a twinkle in her eye which made him think that she was not very much displeased, after all.

"So, Jessie," said her aunt, as, after giving her time to recover her breath, she helped her to arrange her dress, "this is what you call being ready by ten o'clock, is it? You have had a very narrow escape. If it hadn't been for Sam, I'm afraid you would not have seen Uncle John to-day. And I don't think you will enjoy your ride, although you have succeeded in obtaining it, quite as much as if you had been ready to take your seat when I did. Being a few minutes behindhand often spoils an excursion. I would advise you—but perhaps you don't want any more 'advice,' for I hardly think you took the last I gave you, though you did know the reason for it. Did you?"

Jessie blushed. "No, aunt; I was foolish instead of wise this time. I didn't take it at all."

CHAPTER VI.

JOE.

 HE narrow escape had made Jessie not unwilling to return to 'rules' again, and under their restraint the second week of her aunt's stay had rapidly passed by.

On Tuesday of the third week, when Jessie came home, she found that her aunt had been unexpectedly summoned away. The "new baby," as Jessie called it, was suddenly taken very ill, and Uncle John had driven up to the door in great haste, soon after Jessie departed for school, for Aunt Maria to go directly. In a note which had been left for Jessie, her aunt said that she should come back as soon as possible; that Jessie must behave well during her absence, and on no account postpone any duties for one moment beyond the appointed time.

This injunction was twice repeated, and Jessie was a little annoyed that her aunt should seem to distrust her. "Of course I'll do just the same as if she were here!" she thought. "I hope I don't need to be watched like a baby!"

Reminded by this word of the cause of her aunt's absence, she ran out to ask Jane the particulars. "I hope the poor little thing will be better soon," she said, when she had heard all that Jane could tell. "But I shouldn't so much mind having aunt away two or three days, so as to show her that I can get on just as well as when she is home."

"I wouldn't crow till I was out of the woods, if I was you, Miss Jessie," said Jane. "You didn't use to get home so early from school when Miss Maria wasn't here. I guess having to learn your lessons every night, instead of going out to play, has something to do with it. Now that Miss Maria is away——"

"I shall learn my lessons exactly as usual!" interrupted Jessie, loftily. "I'm old enough to see the importance of them now, and I don't need any one to overlook me. Mind you do

your *own* work right, Jane, or Aunt Maria will have something to say to *you* !”

Jane laughed, and declined to have a quarrel on the subject. “We’ll both do as well as we can,” she said, “and then there won’t be any trouble.”

It was not quite seven when Jessie rose from the table, at which she had sat in solitary state. On former rare occasions of father and mother being away at meal times, Jessie, who was never very fond of being alone, had invited Jane to partake of her repast. This Jane, attired in a clean dress and white apron, had been very proud to do ; while Jessie, pouring out tea, had been as happy as a queen. But she was quite offended to-night, and so turned a deaf ear to several strong hints thrown out by her would-be guest. Still very dignified, she walked out on the piazza to wait for the precise moment when lessons should begin. All was right so far. Sewing from four to five, tea at half-past six. On the whole, Jessie quite liked being exact. “When Aunt Maria is away for good, I mean to go on just the same,” she said to

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herself. "Then I shall always be in the 'Roll of Honour,' and get prizes, and everybody will be so pleased with me."

The opening of the gate attracted her attention. A boy of about her own size, ragged, barefooted, and dirty, came in, and, walking up the path, stopped opposite to Jessie and spoke to her. After a few words on both sides, Jessie ran in, said something eagerly to Jane, who came back with her, and in a moment all three went round to the kitchen, where they disappeared.

At half-past nine o'clock that same evening, Jessie, sitting with Jane in the dining-room, closed with a bang a book with which she had been for some time occupied, and taking up two or three others from the table, said, in a tone of triumph, "There, Jane, I have learned my lessons! You said I wouldn't to-night!"

"I said I was afraid you wouldn't," said Jane; "you stayed so long out in the kitchen. You didn't learn them at the time your aunt said, did you?"

"Oh, well," said Jessie, turning rather red,

and walking to the closet with her books, "a person can't always do things at the very minute! Aunt Maria said so herself once! I don't believe she'll care, as long as I did learn them, if I was a little late. I wonder if that boy is comfortable? That was a pretty good bed, wasn't it, Jane?"

"Splendid for him," answered Jane. "He'll sleep like a top, I dare say. Don't you think we'd better go to bed ourselves, Miss Jessie? It's getting late."

"Oh no, not yet," said Jessie. "I don't call it late."

"But I'm one of the early kind, and I'm sleepy," said Jane, yawning. "'Early to bed, early to rise,' you know, Miss Jessie."

"I know 'early to rise,' well enough!" said Jessie, laughing. "But I don't believe it makes me 'healthy,' nor 'wealthy,' nor 'wise.' I wish Aunt Maria wasn't so particular, and then to-morrow we needn't have breakfast till eight o'clock."

"That wouldn't suit me at all," said Jane. "I've got plenty of work to do before that

time. So I'm going to bed now, whatever you do."

As Jessie was not inclined to remain alone, she was obliged to follow Jane's example.

Miss Burton returned the next afternoon. Jessie, who was in the garden, saw her coming along the sidewalk, and ran to meet her at the gate. "Why, Aunt Maria!" she exclaimed. "You haven't walked all the way home, have you? How's the poor little baby? Is it well now?"

"She is better," said her aunt. "I could be spared, and I thought you might need me at home, so as Uncle John was coming nearly to the village, he brought me so far. Has all gone on well? Who's that boy in the garden?"

"It's Joe, aunt."

"Joe? Who's Joe, and what is he doing there?" asked Aunt Maria, stopping short to look at him.

"He's working. Oh, I've ever so much to tell you about him, aunt! He came here last night, and we let him stay."

"But what is the clumsy, awkward fellow

doing among the flowers?" asked Aunt Maria. "He'll spoil every thing!"

"Oh, no; Sam says he knows most as much about gardening as he does, and he set him to work there. I'll tell you all about it," said Jessie, enjoying her aunt's look of astonishment.

"Well, we may as well go in," said her aunt, "out of this broiling sun, though I don't quite like leaving that boy among your father's plants, that he is so careful of. Where did the boy come from, and how came you to let him stay here?"

"Well, aunt, you see," began Jessie, following her up-stairs, and seating herself to tell her story; "you see——"

"I see it is four o'clock," said her aunt, as she looked at her watch. "Time for your sewing, Jessie."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Jessie. "Can't I wait one minute, aunt, till I tell you?"

"No, Jessie, no waiting. Go down to your work. I will come presently, and then you can give me the whole account."

“Don’t let Jane tell you, please,” said Jessie, as she ran off, “for I want to do it myself.”

“Now,” said Aunt Maria, a short time after, coming into the room where Jessie was sitting, and taking out her own work,—“now, Jessie, I am all ready, and curious to hear your tale. Jane has not told me a word.”

“Well, aunt, he came last night, and he said he was tired and hungry, and wouldn’t we give him something to eat? Jane gave him some cold meat and potatoes, and bread and butter, and bread and milk. He ate every bit. I never saw a boy so hungry. And he looked so forlorn. We asked him his name, and he said it was ‘Joe Lumley.’ He was an English boy, he said, and he and his father came to this country a month or two ago. They stayed in the city, and his father tried to get some work, and couldn’t, and then he was taken sick and died. Oh, I felt so sorry for him when he told us that!”

“What did the poor boy do then?” asked Aunt Maria.

“Oh, he didn’t know what to do at first. He

had no money, and the people wouldn't let him stay in the house, and he had to go out in the street. A kind gentleman who had been at the funeral—Joe called him the parson—Jane said it meant the minister—spoke kindly to him, and told him to come to his house afterwards. But Joe couldn't find it, and then he tried to do the best he could,—run off errands, or hold horses, or any thing. But he didn't get much money, and he was very poor, and lonely, and homesick. He never had lived in a city in England, and he wanted to go to the country. So he earned money enough to buy some bread and cheese, and started. He thought he'd find something to do there, for his uncle in England was a gardener, and Joe had often worked with him. But nobody wanted a boy to work in their garden, and so Joe walked on, begging something to eat when his bread and cheese were gone, and sleeping in a barn, or by the side of the road, till he got here. And won't you let him stay, Aunt Maria? I know father would. Sam says he works real nicely, and he's very quiet and good. Jane made him a bed in

the room over the carriage-house, and he was so thankful. You will let him stay till father gets home, won't you, Aunt Maria?"

"I'll see about it," said her aunt. "If he is really a good boy, and willing to work, I don't think there can be any objection, as your father will be home by Saturday evening. If his story is true, the boy has had a hard time. I am glad to find you kind-hearted and anxious to relieve those in distress, Jessie. But I hope your mind hasn't been so full of Joe that you could think of nothing else. How have you got on at school to-day?"

"Oh, pretty well," said Jessie, bending her head more closely than was necessary over her work.

"Pretty well, Jessie? Not *very* well, as usual lately? You did not fail, surely?"

"Oh no, aunt. But——"

"But what?" asked Miss Burton, convinced that something was wrong by Jessie's hesitation and flushing cheeks. "You had another 'narrow escape,' perhaps, with your lessons?"

"I knew every thing perfectly but my his-

tory, aunt, and Miss Walton said she wouldn't call that a failure, because I was trying so hard."

"I am sorry you were not perfect, Jessie. How was it? You studied last night the same as usual, didn't you?"

"Yes, ma'am,—that is—I—I didn't begin *exactly* at the time. Joe came, and I was listening to him, and I never thought till Jane reminded me."

"Did you go then?"

"I only waited a very few minutes after that. And I did study the whole hour and a half."

"Then how came you to have a poor lesson?"

"I don't know, Aunt Maria. But I really did study just the same as if you had been home. You can ask Jane."

"Your word is sufficient, or ought to be, Jessie, though I am afraid it is not quite the truth that you studied the same as if I had been here. And you were wrong to wait even a few minutes when the time had come for you to take the lessons."

"But I wanted so much to hear what Joe

said, and to see that he had plenty to eat and a good bed. I thought you wouldn't be angry, aunt."

"I admit that you had considerable temptation, Jessie. It was natural that you should like to see the boy, and hear his story. But it would be very easy to do right if we were never tempted to do wrong. You should have gone to your lessons at the right time, no matter what pleasant thing tempted you to do otherwise. As to Joe's wants, Jane would have attended to them as well without you. I am sorry this has happened. I did hope, after your narrow escape last Saturday, and your many resolutions not to defer any thing again, that you could be trusted for a short time. But for fear that you might think that while I was away you were at liberty to do as you chose, and, in spite of your warnings, would choose to put off your duties, I left a note, in which I expressly told you that all must be done at the precise time. Perhaps you did not find that note, Jessie? In that case, there may be some excuse for you."

Jessie was sorely tempted to say she had not seen the note.

Before she could decide upon her answer, Miss Burton was called away. "Remain here until I come back," she said, as she went out, "and do not dare to tell me any thing but the exact truth."

She had guessed the cause of the hesitation, and Jessie was too frightened by her look to think for a moment longer of trying to deceive her. "Oh, dear!" she said, dropping her work, and putting her face down in her lap, "I suppose I must tell her. I know I ought to. But she will be very angry. And then this morning! If she won't excuse last night, she'll think it was worse for me to wait till ten minutes to nine this morning, instead of going at half-past eight. What did make me stop to look at Joe? I'm sure I wish I hadn't. I nearly got a mark for tardiness, and if I had, I'd have lost all chance of the 'Roll of Honour.' And Aunt Maria 'll be so much more angry when she finds that it's twice I've disobeyed instead of once, as she thinks now. Why need

I tell her? I wasn't late, after all, and there's no use in making her more angry. I suppose I might as well give up all hope of going to the birthday party to-morrow, as it is. Aunt Maria 'll be sure to say 'no' now. And there's no telling what she'll say or do if she knows about this morning too. I don't believe I'll tell her."

The birthday party was to be given by Miss Ella Marshall, a young lady who had lately come from the city. She was thought very "grand" by all the village girls, upon whom she rather looked down, and very few of whom were to be honoured by invitations to the party of which Miss Ella had talked so constantly for several weeks. Her "friends" were mostly to be "from the city," she said. Only eight or ten of her schoolmates, therefore, had received the little notes which were to admit the happy owners to the sight of all the splendours which had been prepared for Miss Ella's fifteenth birthday. Katie Lansing was of course one of these happy few, and Jessie, as her particular friend, had also been included.

Jessie had been highly delighted with her invitation, which had been sent the week before. Her aunt had rather doubted whether she should be allowed to accept it; but had yielded to Jessie's entreaties so far as to promise that she might go if nothing occurred to prevent.

As Jessie now sat thinking over her difficulties, and wondering whether there was not, after all, some hope still of the party, she quite determined that she would not risk all chance by telling of her last fault. "Aunt Maria is angry now," she thought; "but if I tell her I'm very sorry, perhaps she'll let me go. And I want to go so very much. All the girls say it will be splendid, and my white dress is all ready. It would be too bad to lose all the pleasure. I'll beg aunt ever so hard to let me go, and I won't say a word about this morning,—that is, unless she asks. I couldn't tell a story. It would be too wicked. But I do hope she won't ask me."

Jessie's hopes were disappointed. Her aunt's first question was about the note, her second, whether there had been any farther disobe-

dience. Jessie, after once more hesitating, answered truthfully, and her aunt, relieved to find that she had not given way to the temptation to falsehood, was less severe than Jessie had feared. But, of course, the party was not to be thought of. No entreaties could persuade Aunt Maria to say that Jessie could go, and as an additional punishment, she was not to see Joe, to speak to or of him, until her father should return.


Jessie thought little of this at first. All her regret was for the party. She was more than half inclined, too, to be angry with Joe, as the cause of her disappointment, and she said she did not want to see him or speak to him again. But this feeling soon passed away, and then it was rather unpleasant to find that wherever Joe was, whether in kitchen or garden or yard, there she must not be ; that she could not ask Sam's opinion of his work, or talk over his misfortunes with Jane ; and, worse still, when she heard that Joe seemed silent and sad, she could not go and tell him how sorry she was for him, and that he must cheer up now, for

she was sure her father would not turn him away.

Taken altogether, and in view of its longer duration, Jessie concluded that this last deprivation was as bad as the first, and longed for it to be over. Like many other things not pleasant at the time, it produced some good results. Jessie learned that her aunt really meant to be obeyed; and Joe interfering no further with lessons, the 'Roll of Honour' was safe for that week.

CHAPTER VII.

JESSIE'S PLAN.

R. BURTON returned on Saturday evening; but, to Jessie's disappointment, he came alone. Her mother and Willie were to remain another week. "I don't know how I can do without my precious little darling any longer," Jessie said, after welcoming her father. "I want to see him so very, very much. And mother, too, of course," she added. "They'll certainly come next Saturday, won't they? And will you stay till then, Aunt Maria? I hope you will; and, after all, I'm half glad they didn't come, for I don't believe I'll ever get on at school unless you're here to make me study. You'll stay, won't you?"

"Of course Aunt Maria must stay," said her father. "I haven't had any visit from her

myself yet. She's taken pretty good care of you, I think," he went on, pinching Jessie's cheek. "You don't look as if you had been starved. I hope you haven't been troublesome to her?"

Jessie glanced at her aunt, rather afraid of what she might say. But her aunt only smiled, and said, "I'm pretty well satisfied with Jessie. By the help of our 'rules and regulations' we have got on quite nicely."

"Has Jessie kept to rules?" inquired her father. "It must be for the first time in her life, then!"

"Oh yes, father," said Jessie. "Aunt Maria makes me. She's very strict, you know. I have to study, and get up, and every thing, at the very minute."

"And how do you like that?" asked her father.

"I didn't like it much at first. But I do now,—that is, I like it afterwards."

"Afterwards! What does that mean?"

"Why, I mean I don't like doing the things, but it's nice to know that they are done. And

oh, father, I'm pretty sure of getting into the 'Roll of Honour!' I must tell you all about it."

Her father was quite as much pleased to hear Jessie's account of her improvement at school as she had expected he would be. "Well done!" he exclaimed, when she paused. "I hoped you would do better than you had, but the 'Roll of Honour' was beyond my wildest anticipations! And you are really certain of it this time? You have only a day or two longer?"

"Oh, there's a week yet, father, and more. But if Aunt Maria stays, I'm quite certain, because she won't let me leave a single lesson till I can say it forwards, and backwards, and skipping about. So that's the reason I want her to stay another week."

"Not a very polite way of putting it," said her father, laughing. "But as I know Aunt Maria prefers truth to flattery, and desires to make herself useful, perhaps she'll consider it a compliment that you have acknowledged her assistance to be so needful, and excuse you for

not saying that you would be happy to have the pleasure of her company for as much longer as it is agreeable for her to remain."

"Yes, I mean that, of course," said Jessie, blushing and laughing. "You will please stay, won't you, Aunt Maria?"

Some home matters rather required Aunt Maria's attention, and she had intended to leave on Monday. But she was nearly as much interested in Jessie's scheme as Jessie herself, and she was even more sure that without her aid there was little chance of its being successfully carried out. So she decided to remain and do her part.

"We're very much obliged to Aunt Maria for giving up her own business for ours," said Mr. Burton. "Now, Jessie, you must on no account fail to get into this wonderful 'Roll of Honour.' Perhaps I can be of some help to you, too. I'll promise that when you can show me the 'Roll' with your name in it, I'll make you a handsome present. What would you like?"

"Oh, father, I know what I would like!

But I'm afraid you won't give it to me. It's a pony."

"A pony!" repeated her father. "A pony, indeed! And a carriage, too, I suppose, like your friend Katie's. I should like to gratify you, but such things are rather beyond my resources just yet. You must remember that I have not quite so much money as Katie's father. By-the-way, how is the Judge?" he asked of his sister. "No better?"

"Worse, I heard yesterday," replied Miss Burton. "They talk of taking him away very soon now."

"Ah, I am afraid it will be of no use," said her brother, shaking his head. "But about this present of yours, Jessie? Be reasonable, now. A handsome book, or a doll——"

"A doll! father," repeated Jessie, in a tone of contempt. "Oh, I'll tell you what, father!" she continued, with a happy thought. "Get me a parasol! You know I had to buy the book for Katie instead of having one, and I'd like that better than any thing. Did you bring the book, father?"

“Oh, it’s elegant!” she exclaimed, as her father produced one from his travelling-bag. “Handsomer than hers was, I think. I’m glad I can give her another; and now, if I can have the parasol too, it will be all right. I want a blue one, father, with fringe, and a brown handle, and a white lining, and beads, and——”

“Well, well, Jessie,” said her father, laughing. “You shall have one gay enough to suit an Indian squaw, if you get into that ‘Roll of Honour.’ But I must go now and see how affairs have been getting on out-of-doors in my absence.”

This reminded Jessie of Joe, and receiving a “yes” from her aunt, in reply to her eager question of whether she might speak of him now, she ran after her father to tell him the whole story, before Sam should have the opportunity.

Much to her joy, her father was pleased with Joe’s appearance, and as Sam gave a good account of his behaviour, and the work he had done spoke for itself, it was concluded that the young gardener should have a fair trial, and if

he continued to deserve it, a good home with his new friends.

“Oh, I’m so glad !” said Jessie. “Now he won’t have to go and beg any more or sleep in the street. Don’t you like it, Joe?”

It was the twelfth question she had asked him within less than five minutes, partly for the pleasure of knowing that she could speak to him as often as she chose, and partly to express her sympathy. She was a little disappointed that he was so very quiet, and only said, “Yes, miss,” to every thing. But then she reflected that Joe no doubt still considered her a stranger, as she had not seen him for three days. He would talk more when they were better acquainted. She meant to be very kind to him, at any rate.

“Aunt Maria,” she inquired, when she had gone in again, “don’t you think Joe ought to have some better clothes? His jacket is all torn and dirty, and he’s got such a ragged shirt.”

“Would you like to make him a new one, Jessie?”

"Ye—es," said Jessie, rather doubtfully. "Jane said she'd make him some clothes if somebody would buy the cloth."

"But why cannot you do it, Jessie?" Your aprons are all nicely finished, and you will want some work for next week."

"But, aunt, I thought—I *hoped* you wouldn't make me sew any more when those were done. But, never mind, I think I'd like to do something for Joe. Only you'll show me, aunt, won't you? A shirt is a dreadful thing to sew. And I'll never get it done. It takes mother ever so long."

"Oh, Joe's shirt won't be quite so much work as those your mother makes," said Aunt Maria, with a smile. "I think you can do it without much trouble, and need not be very long about it, either."

"Well," said Jessie, somewhat reassured, "I suppose I'd have to sew something, wouldn't I?"

"Yes," said her aunt, as she looked for an answer. "It might as well be that as anything, then; and Joe really needs one, don't he?"

There could be doubt on that point, so the question was settled by Aunt Maria's promising that the work should be ready on Monday afternoon.

When the time came, Jessie's interest in the future wearer served to make her work quite pleasant, and it did not prove so difficult a task as she had feared.

"It's not so bad as the aprons, after all," she observed, as she folded up the garment at the end of her hour. "I'll get it done in a day or two, and if Aunt Maria and Jane make him that jacket out of father's old linen coat, he'll look real nice. I'll go out now and see what he is doing."

It was a very warm July afternoon. There was not much need of even a linen jacket for Joe just then. Jessie felt great compassion for him as she saw him busily working in the vegetable garden, hoeing slowly but steadily, not stopping even to wipe the perspiration from his face. "Poor fellow! he looks dreadfully warm," said Jessie to herself. "I'll go and ask him to stop and rest. I know father would let him."

"Joe," she asked, as she came near, "isn't this a hot day?"

"I never know'd the like, miss," he replied.

"I should think you'd be tired, a'n't you?"

"Som'at, miss."

"Why don't you stop and rest, then? Father wouldn't care."

"May-be not, miss," answered the boy, working on.

"I'm sure he wouldn't," said Jessie. "And you look tired, Joe. You'd better stop."

"Well, you see, miss," said Joe, still not pausing in his work, "I've got this bit to do, and though I'll own I'd like a rest well enough, I won't take it, for fear I'd not get my work done before the master comes home."

"How much have you got to do, Joe?"

"As far as that fence?" as he pointed to it.

"Oh, you won't get all that done to-day, will you?"

"Ay, that I will," said Joe, sturdily.

"Do you like to work, Joe?" asked Jessie, after she had watched him in silence for a few moments.

"Well enough, miss," he replied.

"I don't," said Jessie.

Joe raised his eyes to her face with an expression of astonishment. "Do you have to work, miss?" he asked.

"Why, of course!" said Jessie, surprised in her turn. "Did you think I didn't?"

"I thought quality like you didn't never do nothin'," said Joe.

"Quality? what's that?"

"Why, gentlefolks. Young ladies, like you, miss. They don't in the old country, where I comed from."

"I'd like to live there, then," said Jessie.

"Leastways," said Joe, reflecting a moment, "most of 'em. Parson's daughter, Miss Lucy, she used to cut about 'mong the rose-trees. She called it work. I didn't. But where uncle worked, the ladies never knowed even so much as where the things grewed."

"I suppose they were very rich," said Jessie. "Very, very rich people don't work in this country, I guess, unless they want to. I'm sure I wouldn't, if I was very rich. Though

mother says people are never happy who have nothing to do."

"No; that they're not, miss," said Joe. "Leastways, I mean poor folks, like me. I don't know nothin' 'bout the rich ones. But I wasn't not a bit happy when I was a walkin' all day in the street with nothin' to do. I'd rather work like a dog."

"Well," said Jessie, "I suppose people are happier for having something to do. But still, I don't like to work much."

"What kind of work do you do, miss?" asked Joe, who was gradually losing his shyness, and was quite willing to prolong the conversation, though not stopping for a moment with his hoeing. "I never seed you do nothin' to the flowers."

"No," said Jessie. "I used to have a garden, but it got full of weeds, and then it was so much trouble to pull 'em up, I thought I'd wait for Sam to do it, and he was always so busy, he couldn't. And now I don't care much for it. I have to sew and study. And that's real hard work, specially now when I have to

take such pains, on account of the 'Roll of Honour.' Do you know what that is, Joe?"

"No, miss. Is it som'at to eat? There was rolls in the city. I seed 'em in the winders, and a girl told me that's what they was. They looked so precious good!"

"Oh yes; bakers' rolls," said Jessie, laughing. "They are good. We have 'em sometimes."

"Do you, miss?" asked Joe, eagerly.

"Oh yes; quite often. But I don't think they're so good as muffins; do you?"

"Muffins, miss? What's them? Oh, I know. I seed them too. But I never tasted none."

"Well, I'll ask Jane to make some for breakfast to-morrow. You'll like 'em, Joe, I know. But what were we talking about? Oh, the 'Roll of Honour.' Such a funny thing, Joe, that you should think it was something to eat!" Jessie stopped to laugh again. "But may-be they don't have 'em in England," continued Jessie, checking herself, for fear of hurting Joe's feelings. "So of course you wouldn't know. It's the names of all the best scholars,

put on a roll and hung in the school-room for everybody to read. And I'm nearly certain now of getting in. I wish I was going to get a prize, too. But it's too late for that. Next year I mean to get one. Did you ever get any, Joe?"

"I don't know," said Joe, more cautious this time. "What kind of things be they?"

"Why, a book, or a medal. Didn't they give any at your school?"

"I never went to no school," said Joe.

"Never went to school! How did you learn to read then? At home?"

"I never larned at all, miss."

"What, never learned to read? Nor to write either, Joe?"

"Nor write neither, miss."

Jessie was amazed. This was a new state of things. A boy fourteen years old who could not read or write! She had never heard of such a thing, at least, never met with such a case; for having always lived in the country, she had seen comparatively little of foreigners.

"Why, Joe!" she exclaimed, when she had

recovered from her astonishment, "how strange ! I never knew a person before who couldn't read. Even Biddy Finnegan's boys can do that, though they do go barefoot in the winter, and are so ragged, and swear so dreadfully. But you're not like them, Joe," she added, quickly : "you're a great deal better, if you can't read. But why didn't you learn ? Wasn't there any free schools in England ?"

"There was a school," said Joe ; "but it was sixpence a week, and mother, she never had no money, for father took it for gin. Besides, I had to work, and hadn't no time."

"Well, you can learn now," said Jessie. "Father will let you go to school, I guess."

"I don't mind about it now," said Joe. "I mean," he added, seeing her look puzzled, "I don't want any learnin'. I'll do well enough without it."

"Oh, Joe, everybody ought to have learning. How can you read the Bible, or any thing ?"

"I've got a Bible," said Joe. "A first-rate good 'un. Parson gived it to father 'fore he comed away, and told him to read it."

"Did he read it?" asked Jessie.

"How could he when he never knowed a letter? Father wanted to sell it for gin, but I hid it. Mother, she could read, and she had a Bible once: so I kept this to remember her by, like."

"Is your mother dead?" asked Jessie, very much interested in Joe's remarks.

"She's been dead this five year," said Joe. "I was a little chap, but I mind her yet."

Tears of sympathy came in Jessie's eyes as Joe wiped his on his jacket sleeve. "May-be you'll meet her in heaven, Joe," she said, softly, "if you love God and read the Bible. But I forgot. You can't read it. Why don't you learn, Joe, so that you can be good? I'll ask father to let you go to school," continued Jessie, "and I'm pretty sure he will."

"I don't want to go to no school, miss," said Joe, working harder than ever. "I'm too big."

"Why, you're not very big," said Jessie. "You're not much taller than I am, and I go."

"Supposin' you didn't know nothin', miss;

you wouldn't like to be put with the babies, to learn the A's and B's. I'm not goin' to no school."

"May-be the boys would laugh at you," said Jessie; "but it's such a pity not to learn. I wouldn't mind 'em, Joe."

Joe shook his head, as if his mind was quite made up.

"But it's such a pity!" repeated Jessie. "Oh, Joe, I'll tell you!" she cried, with a sudden idea. "*I'll* teach you! Then nobody will know, and you can learn to read just the same. Wouldn't you like that?"

"I don't know, miss," said Joe, scratching his head. "I'd be a poor scholar, I'm afraid."

"Oh no; I dare say you'll learn real fast," said Jessie, who was delighted with the notion.

"I would trouble you too much, miss," said Joe.

"Oh no; it will be fun," said Jessie.

"But I've not got no time, miss," said Joe.

"In the evening," began Jessie.

"I'm sleepy, then," said Joe. "There's never no time, for I'm always workin'."

"I'll come out here and bring the book, and you can be doing your work at the same time," persisted Jessie.

"I don't think I could be mindin' my work and readin' the book all at once, miss," said Joe.

It was evident that Joe did not favour the proposition; but Jessie would not give it up. "I do wish he would learn," she thought. "I wonder how I can persuade him? Oh!" she went on, with another bright idea, "don't you like to play ball, Joe?"

"Yes, miss."

"Well, I've got a splendid ball that Jane found. I was saving it for Willie; but he can have another one, and if you'll learn to read, I'll give it to you."

"Is it a good hard ball, miss?" asked Joe.

"Yes. It's a real good one. I'll run and get it to show you."

The ball was not found until after a long search. Then Jessie remembered an alphabet-card also laid by for Willie, which would be just the thing. "I'll give Joe the first lesson

this afternoon," she thought, as she ran down with her treasures. At that moment the bell rang for tea. "Oh, dear!" thought Jessie, stopping at the dining-room door, "now I must stay in. But there's nobody here yet," she added. "I'll have time enough to run out and just show the ball to Joe."

Her aunt met her at the outer door. "Where are you going, Jessie? Tea is ready."

"I won't be a minute, aunt," said Jessie. "I only want to speak to Joe."

"But I want you to be at the table, Jessie, as you know, before the blessing is asked; and here comes your father."

"I won't be a minute," repeated Jessie, impatiently. "Can't I go?"

"If you are not back in time," said her aunt, "you must go without your tea. I expect you to be punctual."

"I shall be back time enough," said Jessie, running off.

Joe had finished his work, and was in the stable, helping Sam. Jessie hastily produced her ball. Joe looked at it, tried it against the

wall, pronounced it "first rate," and was about to put it in his pocket. "Oh, you can't keep it now," said Jessie, holding out her hand for it. "It's to be a prize, you know, after you've learned."

Joe looked disappointed. "How long will it be, miss?" he asked, as he gave up the ball.

"Oh, I don't know. Two or three months: may-be not so much as that," added Jessie, as Joe's face showed that he did not like the prospect of waiting so long. "If you learn as fast as you can, perhaps you'll have the ball very soon. I wish we could begin to-night; but there are those tiresome lessons directly after tea! I must go in now, or I shall be late."

Jessie had observed some of Jane's excellent iced sponge-cake on the table, and was not at all desirous to lose her share of it. So she ran back as fast as possible.

"You are more than ten minutes late, Jessie," announced her aunt, as she entered. "You must go away now. You know what I told you."

"Oh, can't I have any thing?" pleaded

Jessie. "I couldn't find Joe at first, and I came as quick as I could."

"No!" said her aunt. "You should have been punctual."

"Aunt Maria is so strict," murmured Jessie, looking at her father, in hopes that he would interfere. But he shook his head.

"Aunt Maria is quite right," he said. "You are too apt, Jessie, to be late at your meals. It's a bad habit, and if Aunt Maria cures you of it, I shall thank her for doing so."

"I'm almost sorry I asked Aunt Maria to stay," said Jessie to herself, as she went away, with one lingering look at the sponge-cake. "She's too particular. And I never shall think that a few minutes makes such a wonderful difference."

It had made the "difference," just then, between supper and no supper. But Jessie did not choose to take that view of the case. It was all "Aunt Maria's being so particular."

CHAPTER VIII.

LESSONS AND LESSONS.

WELL," thought Jessie, after standing a moment irresolutely, "if Aunt Maria won't let me have any tea, at least I can go back and give Joe a lesson. So I don't care so much, after all."

Joe was still in the stable, and not very eager to commence his task. "You'd better begin to-night," urged Jessie. "There's no time like the present. Aunt Maria always says so, and she knows. You'll get your ball all the sooner, Joe, if you don't wait."

"Well, miss," said Joe, "let me see it again first."

"Oh no," said Jessie. "I took it into the house. Besides, I'm afraid you'll want to play with it. We'll have the lesson to-night, and

you can see the ball to-morrow, 'Business first, pleasure afterwards.' That's Aunt Maria's rule: and it's a good one, though it don't seem nice, sometimes, I know."

The card was produced, and Joe declaring that he knew A and B already, Jessie went on to the next. "You'd better not learn more than five at once, I guess," said Jessie. "Or seven. You may take seven, and then you'll get on all the faster, and have your ball all the quicker."

This being very desirable to Joe, he made no objection to seven, but, as Jessie pointed to them, regarded them gravely and steadily.

"Now you can say them after me," said Jessie. "Then I'll turn the card so that you can't see, and you must say the letters over and over a great many times."

"How many, miss?" asked Joe.

"Oh, twenty times."

"Say them to yourself," corrected Jessie, as Joe began the second time, in a loud, drawling voice, which he evidently thought suited for the occasion. "Whisper it, I mean," she added, as

he did not understand. "It isn't proper to study out loud."

Thus admonished, Joe obeyed, but in a whisper almost as loud as his former tone, and so slowly, and with so many stoppings and beginnings again, owing to his getting confused in the order of the letters, that Jessie grew impatient; and, remembering that her own lessons must soon be attended to, she checked her pupil, who was just considering whether F or G came next to C.

"You must know it now," she said. "Begin, Joe."

"But I haven't said it but fourteen times, miss," said Joe, who had been, with much pains, keeping the account on his fingers.

"Never mind," said Jessie. "That will do. Begin, C, D,——"

"G," said Joe. "No, F. I can't rec'lect, miss, which of 'em comes first."

"Oh, what a stupid boy!" exclaimed Jessie.

"I told you I didn't know nothin', miss," said Joe, looking half-ashamed, half-sullen. "I can't larn."

“Oh yes, you can,” said Jessie. “You mustn’t get discouraged. It’s very important, indeed, to learn lessons, and you must persevere.”

“Jessie,” said her father, quite startling her by his sudden entrance, “what are you doing here in the stable? Your aunt desired me, if I saw you, to tell you that it was almost seven o’clock, and that——”

“Oh, those tiresome lessons!” broke in Jessie. “I suppose I must go in now, just when I am so interested. I don’t see the need of it.”

“But didn’t I hear you say that lessons were very important?” asked her father.

“Yes, sir. It was Joe’s lessons. I’m teaching him to read, father.”

“Ah!” said her father, looking at Joe, who stood with downcast face, fearful that his disgraceful failure would be reported to the master. “I am glad Joe is so industrious as to want to study after his hard day’s work,” went on Mr. Burton. “But I rather think his supper is ready for him, and he may go to that now.”

Joe waited for no second bidding.

"Jessie," continued her father, "you must not come out here again. The stable is no place for a little girl."

"But, father, I wanted to teach Joe."

"Teach him in some proper place, then: not here. And go in now to your aunt."

"Mayn't I wait a minute, father, to ask you about Joe? I want to teach him, but he won't stop his work, and it's so warm out in the sun!"

"Have him in the house, then," said her father. "But there's no time to talk about it. You must go in."

"Just let me ask you, father——"

"Jessie," interrupted her father, "haven't you just lost your supper by your delay in coming to it? And now you will displease your aunt again. Will you never learn to be prompt? Go in directly."

"Tiresome, disagreeable old lessons!" thought Jessie, as she turned away. "I don't see why I must begin at exactly seven. I don't want to study now, and I do believe father is going to get Prince out, and drive somewhere. I wish I could go. But it's always 'Lessons!'"

In this frame of mind Jessie sat down by the window with her books. "That is not a very good place to study," said her aunt. "I advise you to go off in that corner, where you will have nothing to distract your attention. Jessie, shall I have to say *must*?" went on her aunt, after a few minutes, during which Jessie did not stir, but looked out of the window with a very discontented face. "You are wasting your time. You must study."

"It's always 'must,' 'must!'" broke out Jessie, with an angry burst of tears. "I always have to study, and never can go anywhere. It's too bad!"

Her aunt looked up, astonished. "I thought," she said, "you wanted to study, that you might get into the 'Roll of Honour?'"

"I don't care for the 'Roll of Honour,' if I must give up every bit of pleasure for it! I don't want to study now. I want to go to ride with father!"

"You are a foolish child," said her aunt. "And, indeed, worse than foolish. For though the 'Roll of Honour' may not be worth giving

up other pleasures to obtain, it is certainly your duty to please your father and improve your time by learning your lessons."

At that moment Mr. Burton approached the window. "What is the matter, Jessie?" he asked. "Are you in trouble again?"

"I wanted to go to ride with you, father, and Aunt Maria never will let me put off with my lessons. Can't I go?" asked Jessie, desperately. "I'll study so hard when I come back, and then it can't do any harm."

"I shall not interfere with Aunt Maria's rules, Jessie," replied her father. "This is the second time you have asked me to do so. I am surprised at you. Aunt Maria stays here almost on purpose to help you with your lessons, so that you may succeed with the 'Roll of Honour, and——'"

"I wish I'd never begun to try for it," said Jessie. "It's always preventing——"

"Jessie," said her father, "let me hear no more of this. Do as your aunt wishes, directly, and be thankful to her for her assistance, without which I am afraid you would have been

lately as idle and procrastinating as ever. I shall be ready in five minutes," he added, looking at his sister. "I am going round by Garnett's Woods. You have never been there, I think, and the drive will do you good, as you have not felt very well to-day."

"My head is better," she replied ; "and I think, James, I will not go to-night. The 'rules and regulations' may need a little enforcement," she added, with a significant look at Jessie.

"It can hardly be necessary for you to stay at home on that account," said Mr. Burton. "If Jessie is told what she is to do, that will be enough. She can be trusted to study in your absence, I hope?"

Aunt Maria said nothing. Jessie coloured deeply. "Is it possible," said her father, in a more displeased tone than he had yet made use of, "that you must be watched to see that you do what you are told? I did think, Jessie, that you were beyond that, at any rate! Shame, shame, to have to be treated like a little child at your age!"

“Oh, I don’t, father!” cried Jessie, with burning cheeks. “Aunt Maria needn’t watch me, if I did forget once.”

“Twice, Jessie. And I’m afraid it wasn’t altogether forgetfulness.”

“Then it must have been wilful disobedience,” began Mr. Burton.

“Not quite that either, I hope,” interposed Aunt Maria. “Jessie’s bad habit of delay resulted in disobedience; but I think it was not wilful. And she behaved properly about it afterwards.”

“Very well for her that she did so,” said Mr. Burton. “Jessie knows that I allow nothing of that kind. I hope that she will not repeat such foolish conduct. Dry your eyes, Jessie, and begin your lessons directly, and let me hear no more of putting off what you have to do. You have already delayed your aunt nearly half an hour. I hope you will show her, by your diligence in her absence this time, that you are really to be trusted, and that you are a reasonable, sensible girl, and not a baby.”

Jessie took her father’s advice. Indeed it

was a command which she could not think of refusing to obey. Aunt Maria was right. Jessie, though often delaying to do what she was desired, seldom was actually wilful. She was ashamed before long that she had so nearly been so to-night; and ashamed, too, that Aunt Maria should think she could not be trusted, she resolved to do her very best to regain her good opinion. Some time before her aunt returned, she was quite ready to recite every lesson; and good sense and proper feeling having once more taught her that "wisdom's ways" alone are "ways of pleasantness and peace," she was also quite ready to acknowledge that she had been both wrong and foolish, and that she was glad that her aunt's and her father's strictness had made it still possible for her to again look forward to the attainment of her plan, which now seemed as delightful as ever.

"And so you are going to teach Joe to read, are you, Jessie?" remarked her father, the next morning at breakfast. "How came you to think of that? Is Joe very anxious to learn?"

"No, sir, not anxious, exactly; but he is willing, because I am going to give him a ball. And I thought of it because it is such a pity that he don't know how to read, and he don't like to go to school. So I'm going to teach him, and give him the ball when he has learned."

"Joe needs a little stimulus, then, does he?"

"Sir?" said Jessie.

"I mean he is not so fond of study as to be willing to undertake it for its own sake. You thought best to offer a reward. Do you find him a bright scholar?"

"Oh no; he's dreadfully stupid," said Jessie. "He couldn't learn seven letters in—in as much as fifteen minutes." Jessie stopped again to think. "Yes, it must have been as long as that. Oh, he's very stupid, and I expect he'll give me a good deal of trouble. But I shan't mind that; for it's so important, you know, that he should learn."

"Very important," assented her father, with a smile. "I heard you telling him so."

"Yes," said Jessie, "he didn't want to go on any more; but I told him he ought to, and

that it would be foolish to stop, because lessons were so important."

"Very good counsel, Jessie. I suppose you didn't add that they were tiresome, and always preventing people from going to ride, and having a good time, did you?"

"Ah, father," said Jessie, looking down, "I told you I was sorry I said that last night."

"So you did," said her father. "We'll say no more about it. Only, the next time you give Joe such excellent advice, keep a little of it for your own use. Well, did Joe agree with you? Did he think that lessons were so important that he would learn another?"

"He ran off to his supper then, father."

"Oh yes, I remember. He rather preferred the supper to the lesson, I thought."

"But I think he will let me teach him because of the ball, father," said Jessie. "And it is really a good thing for him to learn, isn't it?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Burton. "And as you say he does not like to go to school,—and even if he did, the schools close so soon now

that it would not be worth while to begin before fall,—I am quite willing that you should teach him now. For I regard learning as so important, Jessie, that it is never well to put it off. So teach him as much as you like. But not in the stable,” he added. “You must find a better school than that.”

“But he won’t go anywhere else,” said Jessie. “He is too shy to come in the house, and it is so hot out in the sun.”

“Yes,” said her father, “that will not do. Why not try the back piazza? It is shady there in the afternoon.”

“But he won’t leave his work. He thinks you wouldn’t like it. Won’t you tell him he may, father?”

“Yes, I will speak to him about it. But I shall not oblige him to study, Jessie. Your scholar must be a willing one. By-and-by, if he should stay here, I shall send him to school.”

“But he don’t want to go, father. I found that out before I began to teach him. He is afraid the boys will laugh at him for being put

with the little ones. And so I thought I could teach him now."

"Ah, I dare say you know from experience, Jessie, that it is not very pleasant to be put with younger ones. But Joe need not be ashamed of it, for it is not his own fault."

Jessie blushed as she answered, "I know it has been my fault, father, that I have been kept back with these small girls. But Miss Walton says I may be promoted very soon, and I'm really going to try now."

"I shall be quite satisfied if you do," replied her father, giving her an approving smile. "And I am glad that you are so kind as to wish to spare Joe the mortification you have felt yourself. I have no objection at all to your teaching him, provided, as I said, that he is willing to learn."

"I think there must be another 'provided,'" said Aunt Maria, who had been listening in silence. "Provided it does not interfere with Jessie's own studies or other duties."

"Of course," said Mr. Burton. "It must only be done in play hours. If I hear of its

preventing any other work, it must be stopped at once. And one thing more, Jessie. I don't want you to take this up as a mere whim. If you begin any thing of this kind you should go on. At least you must give it a fair trial. After making all this flourish of trumpets,—I mean," he added, as Jessie looked for an explanation,—“after making so many preparations, and talking so much of what you intend, it would be rather disgraceful to give it all up in a week or two.”

“Oh, I shall not want to stop,” said Jessie, “if only Joe will go on. That will be all the trouble. Will you please tell him, father, that he may stop at five o'clock every afternoon? And then I can teach him till half-past six, for I always have that time to myself.”

“Oh, that is much too long, Jessie,” said Aunt Maria.

“Why, I study an hour and a half,” said Jessie.

“But Joe is very different. He has never been used to it, and will get tired. Besides, you will get tired yourself. I should say half an hour.”


“Oh, Aunt Maria, that is too short! I shan’t get tired, and I guess Joe won’t. Do you think he will, father?” she asked, seeing him smile again.

“Time will show,” he replied. “I will tell him that he can leave his work at five, and you may settle yourselves how long the lessons shall be. Only don’t forget that you, at any rate, are not to get tired under a week.”

“A week, father!” said Jessie. “Oh, I shall keep on all summer. It’s only Joe that I am afraid of.”

CHAPTER IX.

PROMISES.

UNCTUALLY to the hour, Jessie found Joe awaiting her on the piazza. She had felt some doubt, after his ill success of the day before, lest he might desert her altogether, and had provided herself with a large stick of candy, to be used as a bribe in case he needed further urging, or a reward if he should deserve that.

To her surprise, no extra persuasion seemed to be required. Joe did not even ask to see the ball. He began his task, not only without objection, but with so much willingness that Jessie asked why he was so different. Joe would give no reason at first, except that it was "because of the master." Jessie finally found out that Joe, understanding that Mr. Burton, though not obliging him to do so,

would be very much pleased if he would learn to read, had made up his mind to do his best, as a way of proving his gratitude for the kindness which had been shown him. Joe was very thankful for his pleasant home and the many favours he had received. He was not a boy who spoke much about his feelings, or boasted of what he would do. Neither was he a boy to give up when he had once resolved on any thing. So, though he did not tell Jessie a great deal of his intentions, she soon found out that he was not likely to put any hindrance in the way of the lessons.

As for the time, half an hour or an hour and a half was all the same to Joe, so long as he was still working for "the master." As he left it entirely to her, Jessie, on this first day, concluded that, on the whole, it would be best not to make the lessons of too great a length, as it was just a little tiresome to say over and over the letters so often,—at least, it must be for Joe. And though Joe said he didn't mind, she told him she knew he was tired, and ought to stop.

So the lesson came to an end before six. Joe marched off, munching his candy with great satisfaction, and Jessie, remembering with sympathy that Miss Walton had said she was very weary at the close of school, felt quite certain that though teaching was a very good and useful business, she should not adopt it as her own when she grew up.

The next afternoon was an extremely warm one. The piazza, though shady, was not favoured with a breeze. Jessie, after enduring the heat as long as she thought possible, presented Joe with a large plum, and inquired if he would not as lief wait till it grew cooler to finish the lesson. "We must have been almost an hour," she said, "and I'll come back time enough before tea to hear you say it all. If you like you can stay here and study till then."

Joe, considering this a command, sat down with his card and his plum, and Jessie left him to refresh herself with some ice-water, and to see what time it was. The clock must have stopped, for it was not quite half-past five. But no; it ticked the same as ever when Jessie

stayed to listen. "Haven't I been half an hour yet?" she thought, astonished. "Never mind : it's too warm now to go back. I'll have time enough before tea. And half an hour will do very well. Aunt Maria said so, and I think after this I'll have it so, for she knows best, I'm sure."

The bell had rung for tea, and Joe was still sitting on the piazza steps. His plum was gone long ago, and he had not found the card so pleasant afterwards. He knew his lesson perfectly, though, and quite wondered that his teacher did not come as she had said.

As for Jessie, she was at that moment riding through the great gateway into the barn-yard, on the top of a load of hay, and hearing the distant sound of the bell, she scrambled down and ran into the house, thinking of nothing except the possible loss of supper. Fortunately, her father was himself a little delayed, and she was not too late. But she amazed Aunt Maria, who was waiting behind the tea-tray, by suddenly jumping up and rushing out as impetuously as she had come in. "That poor Joe!"

Jessie was saying reproachfully to herself. "I wonder whether he has been in that hot place ever since then? I am sorry I forgot all about him!" Joe accepted her apologies with no remark but "Be the lesson done, miss?" and Jessie, making all the further amends in her power by giving him a picture which was in her pocket, hastened back to her seat. "I'm afraid he didn't like the picture much," she thought. "It wasn't very pretty. Nothing but some big church in France, that Katie Lansing gave me. But I'll have something nice for him to-morrow, and I'll surely stay the whole time."

The next day was Thursday. Jessie came home with "astonishing news." Judge Lansing was to set out on Saturday for his long-talked-of journey to Paris. There was nothing very "astonishing" in that, but there was more. "Mrs. Lansing and Katie were going too!" "Of course," Jessie went on to her aunt, "Katie wants me to be with her as much as ever I can before she goes. It was very unexpected, and she never knew she was going till

this morning. And I am very sorry, for she's my best friend, and I don't know what I'll do without her."

"How long will she be gone?" asked her aunt.

"Three months, at least. May-be longer. But she's going to write me long letters and tell me all about Paris. And we're going to be together just as much as we can till she goes. She's coming pretty soon for me to go driving with her. Won't you excuse my sewing this afternoon, Aunt Maria, just this time, because Katie's going? We want to have a nice long ride. Ah, don't say 'No,' just this time; please, Aunt Maria! If you had a friend that was going away, and may-be you'd never see her again, you'd want to be with her."

Aunt Maria smiled. "Well, Jessie, for once I will let you off."

"Oh, I'll never say you're cross again!" cried Jessie, expressing her joy and gratitude by as hearty a hug and kiss as were often bestowed upon her mother for similar "lettings off."

Aunt Maria looked pleased, and returned the

kiss. "This is an unusual occurrence, remember, Jessie," she said. "I can't give way to your coaxings again."

"But if I shouldn't be back quite in time for tea, you wouldn't mind, would you?" asked Jessie, made bold by her success. "We're going a long way, and may-be I might be just a little late. But I know you won't care, just this time, Aunt Maria!"

Aunt Maria shook her head, but smiled again. "That is the very last indulgence, Jessie. No begging off from lessons."

"No," said Jessie, "I don't expect that. And I don't want to be excused from those. There's only four days more to try for the 'Roll of Honour' now, and I'd be very silly to give up when I'm so near. Aunt Maria, are you going home as soon as mother comes? Please don't, for she never makes me study; and just for a day or two, it would be too bad to lose all."

"I don't see why you need, Jessie. You surely can make yourself study, if you choose."

"Oh, but it's such hard work, Aunt Maria!"

I always want to put it off. Please stay and make me keep the 'rules!'"

"What are you to do when I am gone, you foolish child?" said Aunt Maria. "I can't always be with you to make you keep the 'rules.'"

"Oh, I'm going to try myself," said Jessie. "I really am. But I'm afraid I might fail now and then. It won't make so much difference if I do when I'm once sure of the 'Roll of Honour.' But till then I can't even fail once. So you must help me, Aunt Maria, for fear I should. Won't you stay till the middle of next week?"

"I'll see about it," said her aunt.

"Well," said Jessie, giving her another hug, "I do hope you will. And I shall be very happy to have you stay a great while longer," she added, suddenly remembering her father's lesson of politeness. "I really shall," she went on, as her aunt laughed. "I like you ever so much now, Aunt Maria, though I did use to think I never should."

"Ah!" said her aunt, laughing again, "I

suppose you'll like me very much till the 'rules and regulations' get in the way again! But run away now and get ready for your drive, or you'll keep Katie waiting."

"Jessie started, then stopped. "Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, "there's Joe's lesson! It won't make much difference if I wait till to-morrow, will it?" she continued. "I can give him a double one then. Aunt Maria, please tell him not to stay when he comes; and here's something good that I saved from my lunch for him,—a big piece of molasses candy, and a pickle."

"A pickle, Jessie!" exclaimed her aunt, as the five-inch long, indigestible article made its appearance out of the basket. "Where did you get that from? You never took it from home."

"No; one of the girls gave me this one, and a piece of another. I ate the piece, and it was real good, and then I thought I'd save this for Joe, because I wanted to give him something nice."

"Nice, Jessie!" repeated her aunt. "That

great, flabby, green thing! Throw it away, and never touch another one! They're almost poisonous."

"Oh, Aunt Maria, the girls eat quantities of them, and I never heard of any one being hurt."

"May-be not. But you will hear, if you live long enough, of somebody 'being hurt' by-and-by. Indigestion and ruined health will have something to say then. I know school-girls are so foolish as to like such things; but they are very bad for them. So never eat another, Jessie, if you value your health. Throw it away."

"But what will I give Joe, then?" asked Jessie. "He always likes something good after the lesson."

"Is that your system?" asked her aunt, looking amused. "Lessons and then 'goodies!'"

"It's like what you said, aunt," said Jessie: "business first, and pleasure afterwards."

"I don't know but it is," said her aunt. "Well, it's a pretty good rule, only your application of it may make you some trouble in

providing the 'goodies,' if your lessons last very long. As there is to be no lesson to-day, I suppose you think Joe will want something to console him for the loss of it. You have the candy, and how will these do instead of the terrible pickle, which I imagine Joe, not being a school-girl, won't think particularly 'nice?'"

"Oh, peaches, aunt!" said Jessie, as her aunt took out a small plate of very fine ones from the pantry. "I didn't know it was time for them yet."

"These came from the South," said her aunt. "I think it likely that Joe has never tasted one, as they are not very plentiful in England. Here are two. You may keep them yourself or give them to him."

"Oh, I'll give 'em to him, of course," said Jessie. "I want to make up to him for not having any lesson, for he really seems to want to study now. Please tell him, aunt, that I'll be sure to give him one to-morrow."

On Friday Katie accompanied her friend home. "Miss Burton," she said, after answering inquiries about her father, "I've come to

ask you a very great favour. Will you please let Jessie take tea with me this evening, and stay all night? This is my very last night, and Jessie hasn't been to tea for ever so long, because she's always had her lessons to learn. And it's Friday, and she'll have all to-morrow to study in."

"Yes, aunt," said Jessie, "and you know you never *make* me study on Friday nights. You advise me, and then I do, for fear something might happen on Saturday."

"And if I should 'advise' you now, Jessie?"

"Oh, please don't," said Jessie; "for it's almost the same as if you said I must, for I know you're always right, and every Saturday I've been glad I did. But you're not going anywhere to-morrow, and so it won't make any difference. And I'll be *sure* to study, for you know I wouldn't miss the 'Roll of Honour' for any thing. And it's Katie's last night."

"If it wasn't for that," said Katie, "I wouldn't have asked, for I don't want Jessie to miss now any more than she does. But I would like so much to have her come, and she

promised me, really and truly, she would study to-morrow."

"I am afraid Jessie's promises are not always to be relied on," said her aunt.

"Oh, aunt," said Jessie, looking mortified. "I wouldn't tell a story for the world!"

"I hope not," replied her aunt,—a deliberate story. But don't you often say you will do a thing, and either forget all about it or put it off till it is too late."

"Well, I certainly won't this time," said Jessie. "You may make a 'rule,' Aunt Maria, that I must study to-morrow morning, and then I shall be safe. I'd rather you would, too, than to wait till evening, for then mother and Willie will be home, and I shall want to see them. Please make a 'rule,' aunt, and then I'll have to study."

"No, Jessie, I shall make no more 'rules.' I only 'advise' you to study, not this evening, but now. Your work once done, you will be free to enjoy Katie's society, and will not be troubled by fears that in doing so you run any risks."

"Yes, Jessie," said Katie; "I do think that will be best, after all. For we can have so much better a time than if you were all the time thinking may-be something would happen that you could not study to-morrow. And you know I shall feel as badly as you if you don't get into the 'Roll of Honour,' for you're going to write and tell me all about it. So, you study now, Jessie, and I'll go home, and you can come just as soon as ever you finish."

"'Business first, pleasure afterwards,' remember, Jessie," said her aunt, encouragingly, as Jessie, with a sigh, yet convinced that she was acting wisely, sat down in her accustomed place. "You will be all the happier for doing right; and, after all, you need not lose more than an hour of your friend's company, if you are diligent."

In much less time than usual, Jessie was through her tasks, and well through, as Aunt Maria took care to ascertain.

"Now I'm safe!" cried Jessie. "Hurrah! Now I can go!"

But, as on yesterday, she suddenly stopped.

"Dear, dear, there's Joe's lesson! There's always something! Those lessons are real plagues! I wish I hadn't——" She checked herself at her aunt's glance. "No, I don't wish that, either. Of course I want to teach Joe, but just now, when Katie's going, I really can't attend to it. He must wait till to-morrow."

"Then he'll have a threefold lesson, won't he?" asked her aunt. "It was to have been a double one to-day, you know! If you keep on at that rate, you'll have to devote a whole day to it before long!"

"Now, aunt," said Jessie, "you are too bad to laugh at me when you know I want to go so much! Or are you angry?" continued Jessie, not quite knowing how to take her aunt's smile at first, but now perfectly grave and rather sad expression.

"I ought not to laugh, Jessie, certainly," said she. "It is a serious matter enough."

"What is, aunt?"

"Your putting Joe off in this way, after your solemn promise of yesterday."

"Oh, aunt!" said Jessie. "Do you really

think I ought to stay ? He don't care much ; at least—yes, he does now ; but one day won't make much difference."

" But your promise, Jessie."

" Oh, dear, I wish I hadn't promised ! Must I keep it, aunt ? Oh, I suppose I must. But I really do want so very much to go to Katie ! And I'll have to wait for Joe till five o'clock, because he can't come before. And then it will be ever so late before I can go !" so Jessie fairly cried.

" Aunt Maria," she asked, the next minute, " don't people ever *have* to break their word ?—when they can't possibly keep it, I mean ?—when they are sick, or they have to go away ? They have to break their word then, don't they ? and it isn't wrong either. Is it ?"

" No," said her aunt, " not if it is impossible for them to keep it."

" Well," said Jessie, " it's *most* impossible for me to keep mine. Then it wouldn't be *very* wrong, would it, for me to break it ?"

" But you don't want to do even a little wrong, do you, Jessie ? It might not be *very*

wrong,—it might hardly be wrong at all, under the circumstances, for you to go now, instead of waiting to give Joe his lesson, if you had not promised. But as it is not impossible, but only unpleasant, to keep your promise, I think it would be decidedly wrong not to do it. Besides, this is the second time you have made him the positive agreement. What will he think of you if you fail again to-day? Will he be likely to believe you the next time? You would not like to have him doubt you always, Jessie?"

"Oh no," said Jessie. "I see, aunt, it will be best to stay. I know it's always best to do what you want me to, but it's hard sometimes. I want Joe to believe me, and you too, aunt," she added, looking up with tearful eyes. "You don't think I meant to tell a story, do you?"

"No, my dear!" said her aunt, putting her arm around her. "But you must be careful about your promises. And you are quite willing now, are you, to put off, not the business of hearing Joe, but the pleasure of being a little longer with Katie?"

“Oh, I don’t want to, aunt ; but I will, because I want to do right and keep my word.”

“You have gained a victory, Jessie,” said her aunt, drawing her closer to her and kissing her forehead,—“a victory which the Bible says is better than the taking of a city. You have ruled your own spirit. You have decided to do right when it was pleasanter to do wrong. I am very much pleased with you, and I am sure you are much better pleased with yourself than if you were at this moment with Katie, and had the uneasy feeling to torment you of running away from your duty. For conscience not only approves when we do well, but it is a terrible accuser when we disregard it. But it will not trouble you to day, Jessie, for you have listened and obeyed it.”

Jessie wiped her eyes and smiled. “I do feel happier, aunt,” she said, “than if I had gone without waiting. I don’t like to have conscience trouble me. But I can’t help wishing that it was five o’clock now, instead of half-past four, so that Joe could come, and I might get through ; for it’s a good while to wait.

It isn't wrong to feel so, is it, aunt, when I want to be with Katie so very much? But I don't mean to break my word, for all it is so hard to keep it."

"It is not wrong to feel eager to be with your friend," said her aunt, "if it does not make you do wrong."

"It shan't," said Jessie. "I'll sit here in this room till five o'clock, for fear I might be tempted to go too soon if I am away from you."

Jessie resolutely folded her arms, sat down, and looked at the slowly-moving hands of the clock. Her aunt watched her for a moment, and saw that her eyes were winking very fast, with efforts to keep back the tears which presently would run down. "Poor child!" said Aunt Maria to herself. "She shall go, after all, for I'll hear Joe myself, though it will be rather inconvenient, and I shall have to give up the visit I meant to make. But that's of no consequence."

"Jessie," she said, aloud, "I have thought of a way of relieving you of this difficulty. I heard you tell Joe that he should have a les-

son to-day, even if you had to get somebody to teach him. Therefore you did not promise to do it yourself, and you can teach him by proxy."


"Do you mean that you'll keep my promise for me? Teach Joe, aunt, instead of me? Oh, will you? Then I can go now, can't I? Oh, you're real good, aunt! But will it be quite right?" asked Jessie, stopping in the midst of giving her aunt another embrace.

"Quite right, Jessie,—that is, if you think I can teach Joe as well as you can. It would not be right to have a poor proxy, who would not half do what had been promised."

"Oh, aunt," said Jessie, "you'll teach Joe fifty times better than I could. And you're the best aunt in the world to do it. I'm so sorry you're going away! I wish you were going to stay here always."

CHAPTER X.

JESSIE'S KEEPSAKE.

ESSIE'S visit was a delightful one, although her pleasure was a little tempered by the recollection that she must so soon part from her friend. Katie felt this, too, and was, besides, sad when she thought of the occasion of her journey, and the doubt she knew every one secretly had of her father's ever returning. But she was more hopeful herself. The surgeons in Paris were wonderful. Everybody said so, and they must cure her father. Jessie was quite sure they would, and Katie, very willing to take her view of the subject, agreed that, at any rate, there was no use in being sorrowful yet. The charming bustle, as the little girls thought it, of preparation for the journey, did not leave much time for melancholy, and Katie and

Jessie ran up and down, rather in the way of the older ones, but allowed to "assist" to their hearts' content. The last thing to be attended to was the important matter of the distribution of many of Katie's toys and books as keepsakes to her friends. Jessie's aid was very necessary here, and they held a long consultation as to who would be best pleased with this thing or that. Several of them Jessie rather coveted, but did not think it proper to express her wishes. But as the last one was laid aside, and nothing seemed to be for her, she could not help saying, in a slightly injured tone, "I think you might have given me something, Katie. I'm your very best friend, and yet you don't give me even the least little thing to remember you by."

"You don't need any thing to remember me by, do you, Jessie?" said Katie, laughing, and kissing her.

"Of course I shan't forget you," said Jessie. "But still I'd like a keepsake. I haven't any to give *you*. I wish I had."

"There's the book, you know," said Katie.

"That will do nicely. I'm glad I took it now. I'll always think of you when I read it."

"Well," said Jessie, "then why don't you give *me* something, so that I can think of *you*?"

"Would you like something to keep forever, or only till I come back?" asked Katie, in a mysterious manner.

"Why," said Jessie, "I don't know. People never give back keepsakes, do they? I never heard that they did."

"Oh, they do sometimes, I guess. At any rate, you must give back this one. But you can have it for your own till I come home. You must be very careful of it, though, Jessie,—a great deal more careful than you were about my book."

"Oh," said Jessie, looking disappointed and puzzled, "I'd rather have something for my own, to keep forever, and not have to be careful of it. I'm always letting things get spoiled, and so I'm afraid this would be. What is it, Katie?"

"Oh, never mind now," said Katie. "You'll know to-morrow morning. Only you must

promise, sure and certain, and on your word and honour, that you'll be careful, for its something very nice, and you'll like it better than all these things put together, and I wouldn't let any one but you take it."

"Well, I'll promise," said Jessie, whose curiosity was very much aroused. "Do tell we what it is."

"No, not yet. You must make your very *solemnest* promise, Jessie, to take good care of it, or else mother won't let me lend it to you. Your aunt said sometimes your promises——"

"I'm going to keep them now," interrupted Jessie, turning red. "I certainly am. You know I told you about Joe's lesson, and how I would have stayed if Aunt Maria hadn't said she would teach him. And I'm never going to break my word any more, for I know it's very wrong,—almost the same as telling a lie. So you can trust me now, Katie. Do please tell me what it is? Is it your baby-house?"

"No," said Katie.

"Your music-box, that plays so many tunes?"

Jessie Burton.



“ Why, Katie, do you really mean to let me have the General
and the carriage?”

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“No.”

“Your box full of curious puzzles and things, that came from China?”

“No; I won’t tell you what it is to-night, Jessie. So you mustn’t guess any more. Let us go now and see if mother don’t want some more help.”

Not until a short time before she was to set out on her journey would Katie gratify her friend’s eager desire to know what was the wonderful keepsake. Then, when she was all ready, and Jessie was at the last degree of curiosity, she led her down stairs and out at the front door. “There,” she said, pointing forward, “there it is! Now don’t you like it? And do, please, Jessie, take good care——”

“Why, Katie,” cried Jessie, hardly believing her eyes and ears, “do you really mean to let me have the General and the carriage? Oh, that is *too* good!” And Jessie sprang to the pony’s side and patted him with delight.

“Yes, Jessie, I knew you’d like it better than any thing, and so I asked mother if you might have them while I was gone. She wasn’t very

willing at first, for she was afraid something might happen. But I begged so hard that she said 'Yes.' And, Jessie, you will be sure to——"

"Oh yes," broke in Jessie. "I love the General almost as much as you do now, Katie. And you may be sure nothing shall happen to him. Besides, Sam will take care of him, you know, and he's kind to every thing."

"Yes ; so mother said. She knew Sam would be good to him. And your father will see that he don't get sick or any thing. You mustn't drive him too fast, Jessie, please, or whip him too much. He's a little skittish, sometimes, but if you manage him right——"

"Oh yes," interrupted Jessie again. "I know all about him, Katie. You've let me drive so often, I shan't have a bit of trouble. Oh, I'm so glad I'm to have him ! You couldn't have given me any thing I would have liked half so well. And the carriage is so pretty, too. I always thought it was the nicest thing you had. Won't I have splendid times driving about ! May I take some of the girls, Katie, sometimes ?"

“Oh yes, any one you like. He’s strong enough to draw two or three, for all he’s so small. You can do just as if it was your very own; only I’d like to have it back when I come home, for the good old General has been my friend so long——”

Katie’s fears were falling at the prospect of parting with him, and Jessie hastened to assure her that he should be restored all safe and sound.

“General Tom ‘Thumb,” so termed from his small size but symmetrical shape, and his capacity for learning tricks, in all of which he was thought to resemble the famous little man of the same name,—the “good old General,” as Katie always called him,—received a great many caresses and fond words before she could leave him. He had been her constant companion for three years, and many a “good time” had they enjoyed together. Katie could ride as well as drive, and her side-saddle was also to be Jessie’s property and care during her absence. Jessie had not yet learned this accomplishment, but had often wished that she

could ride, as she had watched Katie; and now that the pleasure was within her reach, it seemed almost too great to be real. She thanked Katie again and again, and made numerous promises that the best care should be taken of every thing entrusted to her.

Her assurances and Katie's fond strokings of her pet were interrupted by the summons for departure. The young friends were very sorry to leave each other; but the pain of separation was lessened on both sides by the anticipation of the pleasure to come after it. Katie was eager to begin the marvellous journey to a foreign country; Jessie no less impatient to enter upon the enjoyment of her new possessions. To sit at Katie's side and sometimes be allowed to drive, had hitherto been her highest delight. And now that this charming pony and carriage were entirely her own,—as they would be for three months, at least,—there seemed no end to the joys in store for her.

"Three months is a very long time," she thought, as she drove grandly home, after having taken Katie to the depot in fine style,—“a

very long time; and I can have quantities of rides and drives. And may-be Katie may not come back even then,—of course I shall want to see her very much; but then I shouldn't be so *very* sorry if she stayed a little longer, for I shan't want to part with the General any more than she did. I'd like to keep him always. To be sure, it's dreadfully selfish in me to think of such a thing, and Katie shall have him the very minute she comes. Only I hope I can have a pony of my own then. But, at any rate, for ever so long this is just the same as my own. Nobody will have a right to keep me from using him just when I want to: and that will be pretty often. How nicely he goes. He's as gentle as a lamb. I know I shan't have the least trouble with him. He shies a little, to be sure, but that's nothing, as long as one knows how to manage him. And father says I can drive as well as a boy. I'm glad Sam taught me with Prince, for now mother won't be afraid to let me go anywhere I like. I don't see what makes mother so nervous about horses. I never was afraid, and there's

nothing I like so well in the world as to drive about. And then there's the riding, too. Oh, I'll have elegant times this summer! It's almost vacation, and then I'll have nothing else to do. I'll take mother and Willie long rides,—that is, if mother will go. And she needn't be afraid to trust me. Here I am home already. I don't want to go in at all. I'll ask Aunt Maria if I can't go somewhere. Perhaps she'd like a ride herself."

Aunt Maria was not at liberty just then, and reminded Jessie that she was not either, for her usual Saturday's work awaited her. It was not ten o'clock yet, Jessie declared. At all events Aunt Maria must come out and see her wonderful present, as Jessie regarded it, since for such a great length of time nobody else could claim it. Aunt Maria duly admired and patted the General, and praised the pretty little basket carriage, with its soft red velvet cushions and carpeted floor. There was even a "cunning love of an Afghan," as Jessie called it, with gorgeously bright stripes, which had been bought only a few days before, and gene-

rously added by Katie to make the appointments complete. The side-saddle, too, was shown, and pronounced a very fine one. Jessie's exhibition lasted for some time, Jane, Sam, and Joe being brought from kitchen, field and garden to view the new treasures. Then Jessie wished to drive down to her father's store. "He must see it, too," she said. "He didn't think I'd have a pony so soon, I guess!"

She jumped in, and was drawing up the reins, when her aunt checked her. "Jessie, my dear, you must let Sam put the General in the stable now. Your father can see him when he comes home at noon. And it is time for your work within doors."

"Oh, Aunt Maria, not yet!" began Jessie, as usual. "I do so want father to see it."

"But he will be at home soon. And he has seen it often already, when Katie has been driving."

"Yes; but somehow it looks different now when it is mine. And he hasn't seen the Afghan. Besides, I want to show him how well I can drive. Please let me go?"

Her aunt gave her head its most decided shake. "No. Sam, take the pony out. Jessie, you must come in the house to your work."

She went in herself when she had finished speaking. Jane and Joe had been gone for some moments. Sam, impatient to go also, lost no time, and Jessie, seeing that she was to be left without any thing to drive, reluctantly stepped down, and followed Sam to the stable. "Mind you take good care of the General, Sam," she said. "Isn't he a darling and a beauty? You must be sure not to neglect him, but give him plenty of oats and——Why, are you going to leave his harness on, Sam? What's that for? You must take it off, and put it away in a very safe place."

"All right, miss," said Sam. "It's only for a few minutes. Please come out now and let me lock the door. I'm in a great hurry."

"But Sam," said Jessie, catching hold of his arm as he was going away, "you *must not* leave the General so. He mustn't be neglected for a minute. Something might happen. It isn't right to put off things even for a few minutes,

for nobody ever knows what will happen. And the General must be taken the best care of."

"Oh, I'll take care of him, miss: never fear. But I must go back to my work. I left it all at sixes and sevens when I heard you call, for I thought something was the matter."

"Something will be the matter," thought Jessie, "if Sam don't take better care of the General. To leave him with that heavy harness on, and not a mouthful to eat! And there's the carriage, too, right out in the sun! May-be I can push that into the carriage-house myself, it's so light."

The great doors of the carriage-house were locked, as there had been some very bold thieves about lately, who had even in the day-time managed to steal harness and other things of that kind. "So *very* careless of Sam," thought Jessie, as she unlocked the doors, and with some difficulty pushed back the little carriage to a place of safety. "With thieves around, too! How did he know that they wouldn't come while he was gone? If it hadn't been for me, they might have stolen the carriage

just as well as not, for there's nobody to see. Aunt Maria's in her room,—I know she's there sewing, on the other side of the house,—the kitchen windows don't look this way, and Joe is off in the garden behind those high bushes, and he wouldn't see. Sam oughtn't to leave things so. And the poor General with his harness on! I believe I'll unlock that door too, and go in and see him. Perhaps I can give him some oats."

Jessie knew where the keys were kept, and it was easy enough to open this small door. The General was quite safe, and not apparently uncomfortable, though, as he turned his head around and whinnied when he heard her, she was sure that was his way of asking for something. "I can't find any oats, and I can't get your harness off," she said, patting his neck. So you'll have to wait, old fellow, till that Sam comes back. I wish I might have had a longer ride. I wanted to go through the village and show every body that the pony is mine now. Aunt Maria might have let me!"

A sudden idea came into her mind. The

horse was still harnessed ; she could easily fasten him to the shafts. Why not go now and take a short drive? To be sure Aunt Maria had told her to come in, but she had not *said* immediately. Jessie knew well enough that she had meant it, but she would not allow it to herself. There would be plenty of time for a drive, for she would not go far, and then she could go in and get her work done before dinner. Jessie almost started when the thought first presented itself, it was so sudden, and almost as if some one had suggested it to her. And no doubt it was so. There is one who puts wicked thoughts into our hearts whenever he can, and tries with all his might to persuade us that they are not so very bad, and that no harm will come from them. Jessie had often heard and read that Satan tempts people to do wrong. She did not think now that he was near, and so she was not frightened as she would have been could she have seen the terrible tempter. She kept on patting the pony, and wishing more and more that she could take the drive, and it did not seem so very wrong.

What harm could it be just for a few minutes? She would return before any one would know she had gone. And she could easily get out without being seen. As she had said, there was nobody to see—no, nobody. She peeped out. Joe was behind the high bushes; Sam's distant shouts to his oxen could only faintly be heard. No one was in sight. No one could see her. "Thou God seest me." Jessie did start now. These words seemed to be spoken to her, and she looked around, half expecting to see some one. But she was alone. It was conscience—God's merciful voice in her heart—which came to warn her. And Jessie could not shut it out. Over and over the words seemed to sound, "Thou God seest me." She dared not do as she had intended. And soon she began to see that what she had thought only a little wrong was more than that. By the clear light of conscience, disobedience and deceit stood out plainly. "I will not do it," thought Jessie. "It was very wicked even to think of it. Aunt Maria told me not to go, and if I had, I should not have obeyed, and

then I might have told a lie to hide it. I am very glad I did not go, and I'll come out of the stable this very minute, for fear I might be tempted again."


As she was fastening the door, she saw Sam coming. "Why, Miss Jessie," he said, as he reached her, "did you open these great doors and shove the carriage in all yourself? You needn't have done that. I was coming back in a few minutes, I told you."

So Jessie would have been found out, if she had tried to get away. She was still more glad now that she had not. "It was what Aunt Maria would call 'a narrow escape,' though," she thought, as she walked slowly towards the house. "I was just going to do it when those words came into my mind. I am very glad I didn't, for I know I should not have enjoyed the drive, even if I could have got out of the yard without anybody seeing. I should have been thinking all the time how angry Aunt Maria would be when she knew it. And I'm afraid she'll be angry as it is," continued Jessie, quickening her steps. She *did* mean for me to

come right in, and I've waited ever so long. I do believe it was the not going in directly that nearly made me so wicked. If I had not stopped to speak to Sam, I should not have thought of taking the drive, in spite of being told not to. I do wish I could do things at the very minute I ought."

CHAPTER XI.

WHO GAINED THE "ROLL OF HONOUR"?

LITTLE WILLIE did not seem quite well the day after his return, and Mrs. Burton, recollecting with alarm that there had been one or two cases of scarlet fever in the village where she had been visiting, urgently begged Aunt Maria to remain and give her the benefit of her experience in the sickness which she feared was seizing upon her darling boy. Miss Burton could not refuse, though she felt that she was needed at her own home, and believed that Willie would be well in a few days. But, as these few days would decide the matter, and her staying would give her sister some comfort, Aunt Maria put herself aside, as usual, and once more delayed her departure.

"You will think I don't practise what I

preach," she said, laughing, to Jessie, when she told her of her decision. "This is the second time I have put off going. However, it is sometimes necessary to defer. The only thing to make sure of is whether it is right to do so."

"I'm very glad you have, aunt," said Jessie. "Now I'll be certain of the 'Roll of Honour.' To-day is Monday. Then there are only Tuesday and Wednesday. Please to be very strict about the 'rules and regulations,' auntie, for if I fail now——"

"Yes, that is out of the question," said her aunt. "You needn't fear my part, Jessie. Take care of your own: that will be enough for you, I fancy."

"Yes, I think it will," said Jessie, laughing. "I don't feel like doing the least thing but playing with Willie and driving the General. Hasn't Willie grown? And isn't he the dearest, sweetest darling that ever lived? When I saw his cunning little face peeping out of the carriage on Saturday, I wanted to hug him almost to pieces! I'm never going to let him go away again. How well he runs about now!

I think he's very smart for his age ; don't you, Aunt Maria? And I do hope he isn't going to be sick. That would be dreadful! He seems a great deal better to-day, doesn't he? Even mother said she didn't think there was much the matter with him, when we were having that frolic this morning. Oh, I do love him so! And if he was to be sick, and die, I don't know what I'd do! You don't think he will, do you, auntie?"

"No, my dear, I think he was only a little sick,—tired from his journey, perhaps. I don't see any symptoms of scarlet fever."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Jessie. "I want him to get quite well, so that I can take him with me in the pony carriage. Mother says she's afraid some accident will happen. But how can it, aunt, when even father says I'm a real good driver, and careful, too? Of course I'd be careful with the General, and if Willie went, I'd be—I don't know what word means the *very, very*, most careful, possible; but that's what I'd certainly be."

Her aunt smiled. "Well, Jessie, I think

myself you manage the pony very well. And I have no doubt you would try to take care of Willie. But the charge of both together would be rather too much for you. Perhaps your mother will go too, and then she will feel safe about Willie, and you can give all your mind to the General. Can he draw so many?"

"Oh, he's very strong. It would do nicely for mother to go, and I've asked her; but she's so nervous about horses. She says she's sure the pony would run away with her. As if he'd do that," said Jessie, laughing, "when he's so lazy that sometimes he'll hardly go at all! This morning I had to whip him, though I didn't want to, for Katie said I mustn't. And I'm sure I shouldn't be cruel enough to do it, if I could help it. I can't bear to see horses whipped."

"No," said her aunt, "nor I either, Jessie. It's a sad sight to see horses beaten as they are sometimes, by cruel and passionate men, who are too impatient to let the poor animals find out what they really require, and then whip them because they don't do it. But there's

no danger of the General's being treated in that way here."

"No, indeed. Sam's so kind to him, I believe the General likes him already. I dare say he'll follow him all around the yard soon, just as he did Jackson, Judge Lansing's man. It's a great deal better to be kind to animals always, isn't it, aunt? for they'll love you then, and do what you want willingly, instead of being afraid, or being ugly, because they are jerked and scolded and whipped. I believe it is so with children, too, aunt. I feel more like doing things for you when you are real kind than when you speak so sharp as you do sometimes."

Jessie looked up the moment she had spoken. "I didn't mean to be saucy, aunt——"

"Oh, I'm not at all offended," replied her aunt, with a smile. "Perhaps I do speak rather more sharply sometimes than I ought. But severity is necessary at times, Jessie. You know you were obliged to whip the General this morning. If I had always been as mild as your——been very mild with you, I rather

think your laziness, or some of your other faults, might have prevented all idea of 'Rolls of Honour,' and aprons, and shirts for Joe."

"Yes, aunt, I dare say they would," said Jessie, ingenuously. "I never did so much in four weeks before, and I'm very glad that they are all finished, and especially about the 'Roll of Honour.' And I know if you hadn't made me, I never should have done it. When you're gone, I'm afraid I shall be as bad as ever."

"I don't know but I have allowed you to rely too much upon me," said her aunt. "I was so anxious about the 'Roll of Honour' myself. Perhaps I ought to have given you more liberty of action, for, after all, every one must learn to depend upon himself in this world. And upon God," she added, reverently. "You will certainly find your own strength nothing but weakness, Jessie, unless you look to him when trial comes."

Her aunt was called away before she could say more. Jessie stood for a few moments thoughtfully. "I do say my prayers every morning now," she said to herself, "as well as

night. I never used to, because I didn't have time. But since I've got up early I have, and read the Bible too. I mean to tell Aunt Maria, because I know she'll like it. She asked me once. And I mean to do it always, and try to think when I say them, too, for sometimes I don't, and then I know God doesn't hear. If I can only keep on getting up early after Aunt Maria is gone! I do believe strictness is better than mildness,—at least, sometimes, as aunt says. And I'm real sorry she can't stay here all the time."

Tuesday and Wednesday passed. On Thursday Jessie returned triumphantly, shouting, "I've done it! I've done it! I'm to be in the 'Roll of Honour' at last! My name was read out to-day in school, and it will be in the 'Roll' to-morrow! Oh, I'm so happy! And I'm to be promoted without waiting for next term, and every body said I had done so well! And father will be so pleased, and I shall have the parasol, and every thing's delightful!"

The latter part of Jessie's speech had been given in a rather more subdued manner than

her first exclamations ; but it was still loud enough to bring Jane from the kitchen and Aunt Maria from up-stairs to share in her triumph. "Oh, it's all you, Aunt Maria !" continued Jessie, as, after dancing about the room two or three times, she threw her arms around her. "It's all you, for you made me study."

"Not quite all me," returned her aunt, "for if I made you study, it was you who learned the lessons. And I think your behaviour in school has had something to do with it, and that *I* had nothing to do with."

"Oh yes, you did, aunt, for when I didn't learn my lessons, I was cross at school, and that made me speak impertinently, and then I got into all sorts of trouble. Once even I came near being sent to Mr. Howland. But since I've known my lessons, I have got on so much better every way. I'm always going to learn them well after this."

"Yes, Jessie, I do hope you will," said her mother. "There's no reason in the world why you shouldn't. I'm sure I'm always telling you to study."

“Yes, mother, but you don’t *make* me, and hear me every night, like Aunt Ma——”

“Your mother don’t always have time, Jessie,” interrupted Aunt Maria. “You must depend on yourself more. If I were going to stay here, I should not help you so much as I have done. You must learn to go alone. Suppose somebody had always taken hold of Willie when he began to walk, and held him up, for fear he would fall. Would he ever have learned to run about as fearlessly as he does now?”

“He did fall a good many times, though, aunt,” said Jessie, understanding the comparison; “and I shall too, if nobody helps me.”

“But he was never much hurt. He only found out that he must be careful. Your mother was sure to be near, ready to catch him when he cried to her for help. So with us, Jessie, if we try our very best, though we may fail, will fail, sometimes, yet God is always near to hear our cry for help, and he is more tender than a mother even. He will never let us fall utterly if we put our trust in him.”

“Mother,” said Jessie, after her aunt had

again left the room, "I like Aunt Maria very much now. Don't you remember I told you I didn't think I should? But I do. Don't you?"

"Yes, dear, I always liked her. And I'm glad she's helped you so much with your lessons. And the aprons. I never thought you'd finish them, I'm sure."

"It was hard work, mother. But Aunt Maria wouldn't let me stop when I teased her, as you do."

"Aunt Maria don't have fifty other things to attend to, as I do," replied her mother. "But I shall make you sew too, after this. There's no reason why you shouldn't help me, now that I see you can work so nicely. There are those sheets. You can do those just as well as I can."

"Oh, mother," said Jessie, "there are great long seams to sew over and over, and that's the very worst kind of sewing. I'm sure I can't do them. At any rate, I needn't begin to-day, need I?"

"I suppose I can't get them ready to-day,"

said her mother; "but I will as soon as I can find time."

"Oh, well, mother," said Jessie, laughing, and looking up archly, "then they won't be ready for ever so long. When you say that, I'm never afraid of having to do things."

"Ah!" said her mother, "but you will find you have got them to do. If I only was not so busy, you should have them this very afternoon. You are too fond of putting off things."

"I'm very glad you are busy, mother," said Jessie. "And I hope you'll be busy every day, for I'd rather do any thing in the world, I believe, than sew. I'm going out now to see the General. I think he'll like to hear about the 'Roll of Honour!' And, mother," continued Jessie, coming back, and putting her head in at the door, "I'm going to drive down to Susy Norton's and take her out. I told her I would, if you said I might, after school."

"But, Jessie, I shall want you to stay and see to Willie this afternoon. I'm going out myself."

“Oh, I’ll take Willie with me, mother. He’ll be perfectly safe.”

“No, Jessie, that is one thing that I will not let you tease me into permitting. I can’t trust you with him. You must stay.”

“Oh, why, mother? If I can’t take him, why can’t Jane take care of him? I don’t want to stay home.”

“I think Jane is busy——”

“Oh, no, I don’t think so, mother. I know she’d like to have Willie. Mayn’t I go, mother?”

“I almost wish that Katie had not left her pony carriage with you, Jessie. You are continually driving about in it, and I know that vicious little animal will do some harm by-and-by.”

“Vicious, mother? Why, he’s as gentle as he can be. There isn’t the least danger. Do say I can go. I’ll be very careful.”

“Well, well, Jessie, I suppose I must say yes, or——”

That was enough for Jessie. Off she ran to the General, who seemed glad to see her.

Joe, who was generally near the house, and who was very fond of horses, and who had learned to harness them as skilfully as Sam, had been lately appointed as the General's especial attendant, Jessie being too impatient to await Sam's summons from his more remote place of work. Joe was very proud of this new duty, and was so kind and attentive that the pony evidently preferred him to Sam. Joe's lessons had gone on rather irregularly since the arrival of the General. Jessie had wisely, as she thought, abstained from making any more promises, telling Joe when one lesson was over that she would give him another if nothing happened. Then, as she reasoned, if she particularly wanted to go any where, or it was very warm, or she had a book to read that must shortly be returned, or she felt very much like doing any thing else, Joe could wait till the next day, and no promises would be broken. One of these "happenings" had occurred nearly every day; but, after all, what difference did it make? There was all summer for Joe to learn in. So when he asked this day, as he

handed her the reins, whether she would give him a lesson, she replied, "I guess not, Joe, if you don't mind very much. I want to take Susy Norton a good long ride. She wasn't very well to-day, and I think it will be good for her. To-morrow will do for the lessons just as well, won't it? I'll give you one then, if I can. It will be just as well to-morrow," she repeated, as she signified to the General that she wished him to set out immediately.

The General was not quite ready, it seemed. He backed, and pulled sideways, and altogether conducted himself in a manner not at all proper in a well-educated pony, who should obey directly.

"Why, General, what is the matter with you?" said Jessie, impatiently. "Why don't you do as you ought, sir, this minute?"

"May-be he wants to wait till to-morrow, miss," said Joe, with a quiet laugh.

Jessie looked at him. "What do you mean, Joe?" she asked. But the pony taking it into his head to set out furiously at that moment, she could not stop for an answer.

"I mean, miss," said Joe, though she was out of hearing, "that's what you're always doin' of. And I'll never larn to read this way. So, if the master's willin', I'll ask Jane. She knows how, and she said she'd do it. Then it won't make no difference if Miss Jessie do want to wait forever."

A proud and happy child was Jessie the next day, as she took her father to the school-room and pointed out her name among those usually seen there.

"Well, Jessie," he said, looking almost as pleased as herself, "so, for the first time in your life, you are in a 'Roll of Honour.' I'm delighted to witness this evidence of your perseverance; I shall certainly redeem my pledge at the very earliest period, and the most magnificent article of cerulean hue ever manufactured for the purpose of shielding the countenance from the rays of the King of Day shall be placed at your disposal. I mean, pussie," he continued, as she opened her eyes wide, "I'll get you that elegant blue parasol just as soon as I can."

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“Oh!” said Jessie, “I didn’t understand all those long words, father. Well, I shall be very glad to have it, for my old one is not fit to be seen. And you’ll remember about the beads, and fringe, and the brown handle, won’t you, father?”

“You shall write down a full description, Jessie, so that not one item may be omitted. Nothing is too good for a little girl who has taken such pains to please her father.”

There was no word in the last sentence which Jessie could not understand, and she coloured all over with delight as her father fondly kissed her, and called her his “dear little pussie,” a pet name of her babyhood, never used by him now except when he was remarkably pleased with her.

“Father, said Jessie, “I don’t think I could possibly get in every time. Aunt helped me so much.”

“Yes; Aunt Maria has certainly worked faithfully,” said her father, laughing. “I think myself that about half the credit should belong to her.”

“Not quite,” said Aunt Maria. “Jessie has done a good deal herself, though I own the ‘rules and regulations’ have had something to do with the result. Shall you be sorry to part with them, Jessie?”

“I don’t mean that she shall,” said her mother. “Jessie must study just as if you were here. I intend to see to her lessons myself after this. Jessie can go on with her hours and every thing, and I do hope that I shan’t have so much trouble as I used to have about her studying.”

“No, I hope not,” said Mr. Burton. “Now that Jessie has shown us what she can do, I trust she won’t go back to the old ways, but try with all her might to improve, and do her very best in every thing.”

“Ah, father,” said Jessie, “I’ll try, but I’m afraid I’ll miss sometimes. Aunt Maria hears me, and explains all the lessons, and never gets out of patience, and won’t let me go till I know every word. I don’t believe mother ’ll have time, for all that. Besides, she don’t——”

“You must depend more on yourself, you

know, I told you," interrupted Aunt Maria. "I think I have helped you too much."


"Yes," said Mr. Burton, with a smile. "I dare say Aunt Maria knows all the lessons at this moment better than you do, Jessie. She has done the work, it seems, and you have got the credit."

"I did some work too, father," said Jessie, in an injured tone. "But I know Aunt Maria helped me as much as half, and may-be more. But when she's gone I mean to work hard, and mother needn't help me at all, and then you'll see whether I can't learn if I choose, all by myself, and get into the 'Roll of Honour, too.'"

"That is right, Jessie," said her father. "Don't let anybody cheat you out of doing things your own self. Let us see how well you can do without Aunt Maria's assistance, and then the next time we shan't have to ask who gained the 'Roll of Honour.'"

CHAPTER XII.

WEEDS.

UNT Maria had been gone for some days. School was nearly over. There were no more "Rolls of Honour" to be tried for this term, and Jessie had no hope of a prize; for one month of diligence could not atone for nine or ten of idleness. When school opened after vacation, she meant to do her very best, and show every one what an excellent scholar she could be. Just now, it must be confessed, Jessie's interest somewhat flagged. She did indeed, at first, make an effort to go on with the "rules," the wisdom of which she so clearly perceived. But now that Aunt Maria was no longer present to see that the exact moment was observed, Jessie often forgot till the hour was half gone. Then, too, her mother's promised aid was frequently

prevented by other engagements, and even when given, was not, as Jessie had feared, quite the same as her aunt's. The third day of this new state of things was marked by a failure almost as disgraceful as in the old times, and Jessie returned, discouraged, to lament afresh her aunt's departure, and to conclude that it was not of much use for her to try any longer now. "After all," she thought, "it won't make much difference for this week or two if I do miss. And it was foolish of me to want to be promoted before the new term began. The lessons are ever so much harder, and, no matter how much I study, I don't believe I can learn them. I'm sure I did the best I could last night; stayed in, when I wanted so much to take that riding lesson that father said he'd give me, and worked for an hour and a half. No, not quite, either; but then I thought I knew every thing. Mother couldn't hear me, so I couldn't tell exactly. But I'm sure I did the best I could."

Aunt Maria might hardly have called it Jessie's "best" for her to sit at the window, where she could watch and be interested in

Willie's and Lion's gambols on the grass ; or, when it had grown too dark for her to see without a light, for her to go and share Jane's in the kitchen, and take an active part in a conversation between her and Sam. Aunt Maria had said, "one thing at a time." "Business first, pleasure afterwards." But Jessie had never liked to be by herself. And company was not exactly the best help for her studies. So it was only what might have been looked for, when the hardly-gained place at the head of the class was exchanged for a much more humble one, and Jessie had once again to hear a reproof instead of praise. She had cried over it for some time, but finally wiped her eyes, with the conclusion that it "didn't make much difference, now that the time was so short. When school began again, it would be time enough to try."

Since then, Jessie had fallen back rapidly. The final week of school found her almost in the same position in her new department that she had formerly held in the other, and glad was Jessie, the very last few days, that ordinary

regulations were somewhat suspended on account of "examination," and that tardiness and half-learned tasks were suffered to go unpunished. A poor figure did she make at the examinations, but she consoled herself under mortifications with the reflection that by-and-by it should be very different. Next year she would do as well as any one.

And so school was ended, and vacation began. Jessie had expected to enjoy it without any drawback, but she found that though lessons, one great cause of trouble, were out of the way, other things remained to prevent her being quite as happy as she wished. Her father had, very unaccountably, it seemed to her, taken it into his head that she would need some occupation through the long days, and had drawn her attention to the neglected garden, which she might now clear from weeds and put in perfect order. In vain Jessie declared that there would be plenty to do. She meant to spend most of her time with her friend the General. She should not be tired of driving him all day long. Then there were the riding lessons, and Willie

to play with, and walks to take, and visits to make. Vacation wasn't meant for work. "No time was meant entirely for amusement," her father had replied. "She would be all the happier for having occupation for an hour or two every day."

So the garden became Jessie's source of vexation, as school had been before. Not the garden itself, by any means. It was a pleasant place, and had been nicely planted with pretty flowers and shrubs. They were now nearly hidden by the tall, rank weeds, which were so hard to pluck up,—like the habits, as Jessie's father told her, which are suffered to grow in our hearts, till their roots are so widely spread and so deep that only great exertions will pull them out.

Great exertions were certainly needed in Jessie's garden, and it was her unwillingness to make these exertions, and her constant desire to wait till some other time for the work, which caused her to have so much trouble, and even made her wish sometimes that there was never any vacation at all; for pulling and digging at

those tough old weeds was worse than learning hard lessons.

Joe, watching her unobserved one day, and seeing her unskilful attempts at jerking up the long stems, which would break off close to the ground, leaving the roots to be grubbed up afterwards, had applied to "the master" for permission to assist her, which had been given. Jessie was rather ashamed to accept this aid from Joe. She had allowed herself to put off his lessons day after day, till conscience arousing at last, she had again offered to resume them. But Joe had coolly replied that he liked Jane much better, and wished to go on as he was doing now. He had made good progress, and was becoming fond of his book, and told her that "Jane gave him short lessons now, like Miss Maria did once, and she never wanted to 'wait till to-morrow.'"

Jessie, who had been tired of her task long ago, was partly pleased at this release from her obligation, partly mortified that Joe should think a servant girl could teach better than herself, and partly uneasy as to what her father

might think of this termination to her "flourish of trumpets," as he called it. He was not surprised, having suspected some such ending. But he talked gravely to Jessie, pointing out that by her folly and want of perseverance she had lost the great pleasure of doing a good deed. "Fortunately," he said, "you have not done much harm to Joe. He will persevere and overcome all his difficulties, I think, and I should not be surprised, when I send him to school in the fall, to see him do wonders. For what he begins he goes through with *without stopping*. Take care, Jessie, or you and he will be another example of the old fable of the hare and the tortoise. You are a long way ahead of him now, but if you wait and go to sleep too often, slow Joe will come creeping on, and may reach the goal first, after all."

Jessie was not so ready with her promises as formerly. She had found out that they were very difficult to keep, and Aunt Maria's lesson had taught her that breaking a promise and falsehood are very nearly related. Jessie had always shrunk from lying as something very

wicked and very mean. "I won't say any more what I will do or won't do," she told her father. "I'm always breaking my word, and so it's safest not to promise."

"But you are not going to give up trying, I hope," said her father, "to overcome this habit, which has always given you so much trouble. It is foolish, of course, to promise positively that you will do a thing when you cannot tell what may prevent. Something often will occur ; in your case, it is too often nothing but your own delay, as now. Joe grew tired of waiting for you, and so chose a teacher who would be more prompt and punctual. And thus you are deprived, as I said, of the great pleasure of doing a kindness. But because you have failed in this, you mustn't be discouraged, Jessie."

"I don't think it's much use to try," said Jessie. "If Aunt Maria was here, I could do things, but by myself I can't. I put off things worse than ever. I don't get up early, and I don't do any thing. My poor little bird died because I kept forgetting to give him any seed.

Mother told me to, and I waited to do something else, and then I forgot again, and then he died. And something's always happening, and I don't think it's much use to try."

"Oh yes, it is," said her father. "It will not do to give up. You must try harder than ever when you fail."

"It isn't much use," repeated Jessie, disconsolately. "*I* never can do things. And vacation isn't half so pleasant as I thought it would be, in spite of my having the General. There's this old garden for one thing," continued Jessie. "I always have to be out here, working, when I'd so much rather be driving. I thought I might do as I chose in vacation, but I can't have any fun at all, because I have to be here every minute, 'most."

Her father had intended giving the afternoon to his own garden; but partly to aid Jessie, and partly for the convenience of holding a conversation with her, he had been for some time engaged in trimming for her, and training up to its frame a sadly neglected rose-bush, which in the spring had been her especial

favourite. He paused now, as he was about to nail another strip of leather, and turning around to Jessie, said, with a smile, "Have you been in your garden every minute of your vacation? Then I must say you are a wonderfully slow worker,—slower than Joe: and I thought he was the most deliberate person that I ever saw. But if all these weeds are left still, and yet you have been working every minute——"

"I said 'most every minute,' father," said Jessie, colouring. "Of course I didn't mean every *single* moment."

"Oh, didn't you?" said her father. "Then what did you mean? Double moments, perhaps, if there are such things."

"Father, I believe you love to tease me," said Jessie, laughing. "You know what I mean. Just that I have to work here most of the time."

"Who obliges you to 'work here most of the time,' Jessie? I said two hours a day."

"Well, father, that is a great while, I'm sure. It seems like all day."

"It may seem 'a great while,' Jessie, but it can hardly be 'most of the time' from six in

the morning till nine or ten at night. You must be more particular in what you say. Working two hours and working 'every minute' are two very different things, as you may find out when you are older. Speaking in that careless way is wrong, because it leads to untruthfulness. A person who exaggerates is very apt not to be believed. You would not like to have what you say doubted, Jessie?"

"Oh, dear!" said Jessie, "everybody is always warning me that no one will believe a word I say! Aunt Maria said so, and now you! I'm sure I never tell stories."

"I should be very much ashamed of you if you did," said her father, "after all the instruction you have had. And not only ashamed, but grieved and displeased. I am not altogether pleased with you now, Jessie. That is not a proper way to answer me."

"Well, father," said Jessie, "I know I didn't speak right; but pulling up these weeds is such dreadful work, it makes me cross! And I'm so hot, and they're so hard to come up! There," she continued, as her vigorous tug at a tall,

brittle stem caused it to break off in her hand,—
“there: that’s just the way they all do! I’ll never get them all out!”

“You need not be discouraged, Jessie,” said her father. “Your garden is already much improved. Keep on, and you will conquer the weeds by-and-by.”

“But they will come up again so fast, father. I thought I had got one part all clear, and now there’s ever so many little ones coming up.”

“You did not get up the old ones thoroughly, did you? If you break them off as you are doing now, the roots are left in the ground as strong and healthy as ever, and of course they will send up new shoots. You must take your trowel and dig down and get out the roots.”

“So Joe says. But, father, it is such hard work to dig and dig around these great roots, and sometimes I can’t get them out, even if I do.”

“No; they may be too strong for you sometimes, I dare say. Weeds which are left so long are very difficult to remove. Their fibres sink deep into the ground, and many a violent

effort is necessary before they will give way. But Joe would always be ready with his spade to help you, if you would ask him."

"But I don't like to," said Jessie.

"Why not?" he is quite willing to help you, I know. And able, for he is very strong."

"Yes, father; but, somehow, I'd rather do it by myself, if I must do it. I wish I needn't at all. It's so much trouble, and, after all, I don't care about my garden, and so the weeds are not of much consequence."

"*I* care about your garden, Jessie, if you do not. I don't like to see it in this neglected condition, for it shows me plainly that you are careless and slothful. And I am sorry to see you so unwilling to repair these faults. You should be desirous to put your garden in proper order, if for no other reason, to please me, and to show that you are ready to obey cheerfully."

"Well, if it wasn't so warm and uncomfortable out here, father," said Jessie. "If you'd only let me wait till next month. It will be cooler then, and it wouldn't be such disagree-

able, hard work. I do wish there were no such things as weeds in all the world !”

“ Ah, Jessie, you may well wish so,” said her father. “ There are some weeds worse than any in your garden, that will give you a great deal of trouble, I am afraid, before you can get rid of them.”

Jessie looked up inquiringly.


“ I mean the *heart weeds*, Jessie,—weeds of self-will, idleness, procrastination. They will need a great deal of digging at their roots. The trowel of determination must be used many times before all their fibres are dislodged. Did you ever think how our work in a garden resembles our work of life, Jessie ?” We must sow our good seeds and set out carefully our choice plants, water and tend them constantly. But the thistles and docks, and all the other ill-looking, pricking, choking weeds, come up of themselves, and spread and grow almost faster than we can prevent by our most vigilant watchfulness. All the more, if our garden be neglected till the sun becomes powerful, and the showers, so needful for the growth of the

good plants, also nourish the bad ones. Then, sometimes in a single night, our ground will be covered so thickly over with these freshly-springing weeds, that we are nearly ready to think, 'Truly we shall never be rid of them.' But work will do it. It must be the right kind of work,—willing work, constant work. Hard work it will be, perhaps beyond our own strength, so we must accept all the help offered to us, and not foolishly trust in our own power. Jessie, you said just now that 'by yourself you could not do what you ought.' I am glad to hear you say so. It is a very important lesson to learn, that 'of ourselves we can do nothing.' If you have found out that all your efforts to conquer your bad habits will be in vain so long as you have no help, you will surely not be so foolish as to refuse to avail yourself of the aid which you can have for the asking. If you will not let Joe assist you to dig up the roots which are too deeply embedded for your own strength, you will never see your garden free from these ugly weeds. No matter how often you snap off their heads, they will

grow again. And if you break off your habits over and over again, while their roots are deep in your heart, they will as surely spring up afresh. You must seek God's help, Jessie. He alone can give strength to dig down far enough to remove those weeds which are so very much more offensive in his sight than the nettles and briars and thorns which meet our eyes in the garden of the sluggard. I trust that your gardens may not be like his,—neither this actual garden, nor that figurative one, so very, very far beyond this in value. You remember the Bible says, 'Lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.' And, Jessie, it gives us the reason:—'Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.' What is this but dislike of work and desire to defer it? Take especial care, my child, of those fast-growing weeds of idleness and procrastination, lest they spread over your ground, and, breaking down your walls, let in upon you God's anger and his sure punishment."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GENERAL.



ON the whole, Jessie concluded that if an hour or two must be spent in the garden every day, vacation had its pleasures notwithstanding. One of the chief of these, greater even than her enjoyment of her pony, was the plenty of time to play with Willie. The little fellow was entirely well now, very active, and never so delighted as when trotting after his sister. Jessie, for her part, was never, or very seldom, tired of his society, and when at home, was always seen with his hand in hers as he pattered by her side, or holding him on Lion's back to take a ride, or leading him to stroke the General's white nose. She was very eager to have Willie mounted on the pony's back instead of Lion's, but her mother would not consent. Then

Jessie would urge her old plan of all going in the carriage. What possible danger could there be? Nothing had ever happened, and she had driven the General a hundred times, at least, now. Her mother and Willie must certainly go. The cushions were so soft, and the little carriage so easy, that Jessie was sure, after once trying it, her mother would never want to ride in the old rockaway again. And as to any danger, "it was only because mother was so nervous that she thought of such a thing. Aunt Maria had been with her, and father, and they said she drove as well as Sam. And if the pony did frisk a little once in a while, that was nothing. She was strong enough to hold him and make him behave himself. There was plenty of room for all three on the wide seat. And Willie would look so 'cunning,' with the Afghan over him. Mother *must* go."

Jessie teased so persistently that her mother gave way. One fine afternoon, Jessie drove off triumphantly with her passengers, one of whom, in spite of the driver's assurances, sat most of the way in secret uncasiness, closely

watching every movement of the—as she would think him—not-to-be-depended-upon little General.

“There, mother, you see nothing has happened!” cried Jessie, equally exultant, as she drove safely back into the yard, and reined up skilfully by the side of the carriage block. “And can’t I drive well? And don’t you think the General is a splendid fellow, and not a bit ‘vicious,’ as you called him once? And you’ll go very often, won’t you, now that you know it’s perfectly safe? Willie has enjoyed the ride ever so much! Haven’t you, little darling brother?”

Jessie gaily jumped out, and threw the reins across the pony’s back. “Fasten him, Jessie,” said her mother, holding Willie tightly, as Jessie tried to lift him out. “Tie the pony safely to the post, and don’t leave him that way. He might start.”

“Oh, he never does, mother. He stands ever so long without tying. I left him half an hour the other day.”

“It’s safer to tie him, at any rate,” said her

mother. "And I won't get out, nor let Willie, till you do."

"Well, I'll tie him, mother. But he'd stand, I know. Wouldn't you, old General?" she asked, patting him. "Good old fellow! you wouldn't start, or run away, or any thing, would you? Haven't we had a good time, mother?" went on Jessie, coming to take Willie. "You won't be afraid to go again, will you?"

"No," said her mother, "I don't know that I shall. But you must always be very careful. And I don't want the horse left standing anywhere while I am in the carriage."

"'Horse,' mother!" repeated Jessie. "Please don't call him a 'horse!' A 'horse' is a great ugly thing, but the General is a dear, cunning little pony, the best one in the world, I believe!"

"Well, pony, then," said her mother, laughing, as Jessie put her arms around his neck and hugged him. "You are half wild to-day, I believe, Jessie! Take care, or he'll bite you!"

"Oh, he knows better than that," said Jessie.

"He don't play many tricks with me. I like him better every day, and I'm glad that Katie thinks they'll stay all winter, for then I can keep him so much the longer. And I'm so glad, too, that Willie can drive with me 'most always now, for I want the little darling to be with me all the time. Come, little brother, see who'll get in the house first! See, mother, how fast he runs! I used to think he'd never walk, it seemed as though he was so slow in learning. But he walks well enough now, don't he?"

Jessie ran with him several times up and down the piazza, before letting him follow his mother into the house. Her antics tumbled a paper from her pocket.

"There's Katie's letter, I declare," she said to herself, as she picked it up, "lying there on the floor, as if I didn't care for it at all. But it's the first real, true letter I ever got in my life, and, besides, it came all the way from Paris. It's wonderful how letters can come so far without getting lost! And it's wonderful, too, to think of Katie's being in Paris. I must read again what she says."

"Miss Jessie," said Joe, stopping as he passed just then, "will you please, miss, drive the pony to the stable? I be goin' of a errand, and I'll be back soon to mind him."

"Oh, he's well enough there," said Jessie. "He's tired."

"No, miss, the strap be undone. He's bitin' of the post."

"Has he got it unfastened? Never mind: he won't do any mischief, I guess, for a few minutes. I want to read my letter. See there, Joe, that came all the way from Paris!"

Joe looked at the letter rather vaguely, not having heard of Paris before. "It's from Katie, Joe," continued Jessie; "Miss Katie Lansing, you know, that lent me the General. They're going to stay all winter in Paris, and so I can keep the pony. Won't that be nice?"

"Look, miss," said Joe, "how he do be bitin' that post! The master won't like that. And I can't stop to take him to the stable."

"I'll turn his head around," said Jessie. "There, now he can't do any harm. And when I've read my letter again, I'll drive him

to the stable. It only came this afternoon, and I haven't half read it yet."

The latter part of this address was lost on Joe, who was at the gate. He looked back and shook his head at the pony, who by this time was trying to gnaw off the branch of a tree which hung over his head. "I'll be as quick as ever I can," thought Joe. "Miss Jessie, she won't think of him no more now, with her 'parish,' or whatever she's got. And that there pony's so full of mischief, he'll want som'at o' lookin' arter."

"Jessie's letter from Katie had been inclosed in one from her mother to Mrs. Burton. Judge Lansing was rather better, and it was thought best, at least, to spend the winter in Paris. Mrs. Lansing and Katie had not seen as yet many of the sights of that famous city; but what Katie had witnessed had excited her admiration and wonder, and she had had the patience to fill three sheets with an attempt to give her friend a share in these marvels. It took Jessie some time to go over it all once more. When she raised her eyes from the end

of the letter with a remembrance of the pony, he had disappeared, carriage and all.

Jessie jumped up, and hearing a crackling sound to the right of the house, ran in that direction, and found the General close to the side fence, two or three panels of which he had been munching at. Not much damage was done to the fence ; but Jessie discovered, to her dismay, that he had walked, of course dragging the carriage behind, directly over the beds of a small flower garden, which was only enclosed by a very low hedge. These beds contained some of her father's most valued plants, and sad work had the General's hoofs and the wheels of the carriage made with them. Rare fuchsias, verbenas, and Japan lilies were trampled into the dirt ; and the hedge, newly set out, and of some peculiarly choice variety, was broken in several places.

Jessie ran up in great wrath. As once before, with Lion, she was disposed to consider it no fault of hers. The pony was the one to blame. " Didn't you know any better than that, General ? " she asked, more than half inclined to lay

the whip over his back. "To walk right over father's best flowers! I don't know what he'll say to you, I'm sure. You ought to be whipped!" She shook the lash over him threateningly. The General, apparently in no fear, turned his head, looked at her, whinnied, and began his munching again. "Spoiling the fence, too!" cried Jessie, giving him a jerk with the reins. "Is there no end to your mischief, sir? Go right back to your stable."

But how to get him back without doing still more damage Jessie could not see. There was not room for the carriage except by the way he had come. Jessie was trying to unfasten some of his buckles to lead him away from the carriage, when Joe came up. "I knowed he'd do a mischief," said Joe, looking at the beds. "The master won't like that, for sartin. Maybe I'd ought to a' stayed."

Joe looked so troubled that Jessie hastened to comfort him. "It isn't your fault, Joe. Father won't be angry at you. Did you think he would? You couldn't help it."

"May-be not, miss," said Joe, taking the

horse away. "I suppose you couldn't neither?" he added, looking over his shoulder.

"I?" said Jessie, startled. "How could I help it? To be sure, I knew the pony wasn't tied. But, then, how should I know that he was going to take it into his head to walk off there? I never knew a horse to do such a thing before in all my life. Did you, Joe?"

"Well, miss," replied Joe, "you see ponies isn't like horses in all ways. They be's mostly up to a good many tricks. Leastways I'd never trust none of 'em."

Joe went off, leaving Jessie kneeling before the broken flowers, vainly trying to make them stand upright. "Of course it's all the General's fault," she repeated to herself. "Father can't blame *me* about it."

But she felt a strange reluctance to tell her father of the occurrence. "He will be so sorry to hear that his nice flowers are so trampled on, some of them almost destroyed," she thought. "I don't like to tell him. But he surely won't scold me for it!"

Mr. Burton did not 'scold.' His view of

the case was, however, somewhat different from Jessie's. "I rather think," he said, "if you had not put off seeing that the pony was properly fastened, or put off taking him to the stable when Joe asked you, the mischief would not have occurred. Your share of the matter is considerably more than the General's; and as if I should punish him he might not exactly understand the reason, and so it perhaps would not prevent his repeating the offence, you will have to suffer instead of him. And as you have more sense than he has, it may be well for you to profit by your lesson, and remember that it is never safe to defer, even in what seems a trifle."

For a week Jessie was not allowed to drive nor ride the General. It was a sad deprivation. Still she had Willie to play with, and the week could not last forever. It came to an end at length, and joyfully Jessie once more found herself at liberty to enjoy the company of her four-footed friend. To be sure, he had brought her into disgrace, but Jessie was quite willing to forgive him and take him into favour again.

“Only, you mustn’t play any more tricks, old fellow,” she said to him. “It isn’t quite fair for you to do the bad things and me to be punished for them. Though I know I oughtn’t to have put off taking you to the stable. If I didn’t think it wasn’t the least use, I’d say I’d never ‘put off’ any thing again,” went on Jessie to herself. “But I’ve said that so often, I’m tired of it. I wish I could always do right, I’m sure, and not displease father or mother or any one. But it’s dreadfully hard work. Just as father says, it’s like digging around the big roots. I’d never have got them out if Joe hadn’t spaded them for me. And father said I must ask for help about the other things too. That means praying, I know. But I am so sleepy in the morning, I never get up time enough ; and at night, somehow, it seems such a trouble to say any thing except ‘Our Father,’ and my other prayer. I know it’s very wrong,” Jessie confessed to herself. “And I will try to do better. To-morrow I’ll begin.”

Even with Joe’s help, Jessie did not get up

all the roots. For many of them having no external mark to show where they were, she had missed them, and others she had, being tired of the labour, suffered to remain, thinking them so far below the surface that, at any rate, they would not get up again that summer. But she was mistaken. Several weeks after she had, as she supposed, finished all that tiresome business, she was astonished, and not at all pleased, to find a fresh crop of weeds, threatening destruction to her flowers as before. "Now, father, have I got it all to do over again?" she asked, despairingly, when one evening she had joined him in a walk around the garden. "I thought that was over and done with, and yet they're 'most as bad as ever. I'll never have a garden again, never. Now, I suppose I must work here to-morrow, instead of taking mother and Willie that drive up on the mountain. Mother's been promising to go for ever so long, and she said she would to-morrow. But I dare say you'll make me begin this hateful work again, without waiting a single day, father."

“Jessie, Jessie!” said her father, reprovingly, “you should not call any work ‘hateful.’ And this will not be as difficult as it was at first. A day or two will set it right again. Only you must be sure not to leave the roots this time.”

“Well, father, then if it won’t take long, I needn’t begin it right away, need I? A day or two to wait won’t make much difference.”

“I don’t know that it will, Jessie,—that is, that it will make much difference with the weeds here. But every day that you allow yourself to put off a duty makes a great difference with that evil weed of procrastination, which is flourishing too well yet, Jessie, in your heart-garden. Make another strong effort, my dear, to uproot it. Give up your pleasure, if need be, for your work. Do it earnestly and conscientiously, and you will find that you have loosened the hard soil in which that weed grows, and after a continuance of these efforts you will be able to cast it aside for good and all, I hope, just as I now fling this sprawling thing out in the path for Joe to cast away.”

Mr. Burton had been handling the trowel as he spoke. "See, Jessie," he said, throwing down the weed, "now it can never trouble you any more. Would you not be glad to be rid of your other troubles as quickly?"

"Yes, father," said Jessie, with a sigh. "But it is so different. And must I really stay at home then to-morrow?"

"Is it necessary, Jessie? An hour's work here need not prevent your excursion, I should think."

"But father, unless we start very early there will not be time for the mountain, for it is a pretty long drive, and sometimes the General is so slow, he'll only walk. And mother always wants to get back so long before dark. If I go to the mountain I shan't have time to work in the afternoon too."

"Do it in the morning, then."

"Yes, I would, father, but to-morrow's Saturday, and there's that hateful old—I mean," as she caught her father's warning glance,—“that disagreeable sweeping that has to be done. And I can't put it off, for mother said——”

“Well, Jessie,” said her father, as she stopped, “it’s such an uncommon thing for you to find a reason for *not* putting off, that I’m quite curious to hear it. You always have plenty on the other side. What did mother say?”

“She said,” went on Jessie, colouring, “that I must have my room in order by twelve o’clock, or she—she would tell you, father. She didn’t like it because I hadn’t done it for two or three weeks. And so, you see, I must stay at home in the morning, or else I could take the drive then. And I shan’t have any time for the weeding. What *shall* I do, father? Must I give up my drive?”

“You can take it as well on Monday.”

“Ah, father,” said Jessie, archly, “so can I do the work as well on Monday! Please don’t make me do it to-morrow! The work will keep, but I’m afraid the berries up on the mountain won’t, for it’s getting so late for them.”

Her father smiled, yet rather gravely. “Do as you choose, Jessie,” he said. “You are old enough to know what is right. You may do as you like.”

"Oh, father," said Jessie, half laughing, half vexed, "that's just what Aunt Maria used to say sometimes. Only, she always ended by 'advising' me to do the work. And for fear of something happening, I always had to choose the work. Though once I didn't, and then I had a narrow escape. You won't 'advise' me, will you? There's no good in being told I can do as I like, if I have 'advice' about it."

"Well," said her father, "I will leave you quite free. Go or stay, as you please. Only, I think——"

"Now, father, you *are* going to 'advise!'" cried Jessie. "You are as bad as Aunt Maria!"

"Well, Jessie," said her father, with another smile, "Aunt Maria's 'advice' was generally pretty good, I imagine. But I'll say no more about it. Do as you choose. Please me by trying to conquer your bad habit, or please yourself by going after berries on the mountain."

He was very sober again, and Jessie could not doubt what his 'advice' would have been. "I'm afraid he thinks I ought to stay," said Jessie to herself, when her father had left her.

"I know he does. But then he said I might do as I liked. And I don't see what difference it will make."

Jessie chose the drive. The next afternoon was lovely. These September days were the very ones for driving. As soon as possible, after dinner, Jessie, her mother, and Willie set out for the mountain, as it was called, though it was, in reality, only a pretty high hill, very steep in some places, and covered mostly with woods and thick underbrush. The road went around the base for some distance, finally rising over the brow, which was more free from trees, and afforded a fine view for several miles. It was rather a lonely drive, but a pleasant one, winding between oaks, maples, and chestnut trees, which made a grateful shade from the warm sun. Even the partly open space at the top was sheltered on the west, and Jessie, with whom it was a favourite resort, always stopped here to enjoy the view, and to look for the berries which grew there in profusion. A short distance down the road, another joined it, leading to a farm-house on the other side of the

hill. Except this one, no other house was nearer than a mile or two. Jessie liked the quiet grassy spot at the top of the hill, and sometimes said she wished there was a little house there where she could stay all summer. "It would be so convenient about berries, for one thing," she said. "One would only have to go out of the back door to find all they wanted." She and the companion who was so fortunate as to be chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the carriage generally spent half an hour when they came this way, roaming around, picking the fruit, and sitting on the grass by the roadside to eat it, and see at the same time the green meadows spread out below them, looking so beautiful in the bright sunshine, with the little sparkling river, like a silver thread, winding among the farm-houses and golden grain-fields.

Jessie drew up as usual, this afternoon, when she reached the place. "Isn't the view lovely?" she asked. "I always stop here."

"Yes, beautiful!" said her mother. "But this is a dangerous place, Jessie."

"But the road don't go very near the steep part, mother, and so it is quite safe."

"Where are you going, Jessie?" asked her mother, as she got out of the carriage.

"Only back here a little way, to look for berries," said Jessie.

"But you must not go off and leave the horse," said her mother. "And I don't want to go off among those bushes. Willie can't walk in such a rough place."

"Well, you stay in the carriage, mother, with him, and I'll bring you some berries. There's beautiful blackberries back there, I know, if they're not all gone: for it's getting late for them now. They were splendid a week or two ago."

"But, Jessie, you must not go and leave us here in this way," said her mother, as she was running off. Here's the horse not even tied——"

"But, mother, he'll stand; I know he will," said Jessie, impatiently. "He always does. And there's nothing to tie him to."

"Wait, Jessie, and help me out, I don't

want to stay in the carriage with you off there. What if something should come along and frighten the horse? I couldn't manage him."

"Why, mother, what could come along? There isn't a wagon once an hour on this lonely road. Besides, it wouldn't frighten him. He's used to 'most every thing."

"I shan't trust him," said her mother. "See how he puts back his ears. Help me and Willie out, and then go and get your berries; but don't stay long, for I think it's a little damp here, and neither Willie nor I have on thick shoes."

"I won't be gone but a minute mother," said Jessie. "Here's a nice rock for you to sit on and see the view. Don't it look lovely?"

"Don't be gone long," repeated her mother. "This sharp rock isn't a very comfortable seat."

"No, I won't," said Jessie, and ran off.

She did not find the berries so abundant as they had been. It was getting late, and most of the bushes had very little fruit on them. She went further and further, and had just discovered a spot where they still hung thickly,

when she heard her mother's call. "Jessie, I want you to come now. I am tired of sitting here, and so is Willie. We want to get into the carriage now, and you must come."

"Yes, mother, in a minute," said Jessie. "I just want to pick all these berries. They're so good, it's a pity to leave one. Won't you please wait a few minutes, mother?"

"Well, only a very few minutes, then, Jessie. Willie is tired, and so am I."

Jessie had returned a short distance, so that she could hold this conversation. She now ran back to her berries. After all, they did not half fill the little basket she had brought. May-be there were more a few steps further. On and on went Jessie, till her mother's call, which she heard again, sounded quite distant. "In a minute," she called back again, as loud as she could. Once more she heard the call. "Jessie, I am going to get in. Come!"

"Oh, I do wish mother wouldn't be in such a hurry," said Jessie, to herself. "She won't wait half a minute. I must just stop for these splendid great fellows. They'll nearly fill my


basket. And here are some more. Why, this is a real thick place. I do wish mother——oh, I suppose I must go,” she thought, snatching up her basket as again, “Jessie, Jessie, come quick!” reached her ears. “I dare say mother thinks the pony is going to play some trick if he looks behind him,” she went on, after shouting, “Yes, I’m coming! I’ll have to go, but it’s a shame to leave these berries. I wish——”

At that moment she heard her mother’s voice in screams of terror. Dropping basket and berries, Jessie ran rapidly, and coming out from behind the bushes which had hid the road from her sight, she saw what filled her with consternation. The pony was dashing furiously down the hill, already at some distance, the little carriage swaying to and fro on the rough road. Coming towards her was a peddler’s wagon, with bright tinware slung over the top, dazzling in the sunlight which came through an opening in the trees. The glittering reflection, and the tinkling sound of the pans and pails, coming suddenly upon the General as the wagon had turned the corner from the farm-road and

rattled along towards him, had startled him into a panic, and, still more frightened by Mrs. Burton's screams, he had plunged wildly on in the direction opposite to which they had come. The peddler had stopped his horse, and run after the party whom he had unwittingly placed in so much peril. At the moment when Jessie came out, he was in pursuit of the terrified pony, which his shouts only caused to dash on faster than ever. Jessie saw and understood the whole at a glance, and, almost fainting with fright, she, too, ran in the same direction. She could see the carriage, with her mother still in it, now quite distant. It was wonderful that it had not yet been overturned or broken. While the thought passed through her mind, she saw it dashed against a tree, heard a faint scream, and closed her eyes, her last conscious feeling being the conviction that her mother and Willie were killed, and that she was the unhappy cause.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SAD HOUSEHOLD.

OUR days had passed since the accident. Mrs. Burton, though providentially escaping with no bones broken, had been severely bruised and terribly shocked by the sudden and violent fall. She had not until this fourth evening been allowed to leave her bed. Now, though scarcely able, and almost shrinking from the sight which she feared must be so dreadful, since no one would tell her his-precise condition, she could no longer be kept from the side of her darling Willie.

At first view, there seemed no cause for such dread. The little boy lay apparently sleeping, his face calm and fair as ever, and one dimpled hand outside his covering. No bruise nor even scratch was visible. But he lay so still that a

sudden pang shot through his mother's heart as she bent down to watch for the breath which might be gone, so motionless was the dear form before her. "Oh, surely you told me he was not—not dead?" she gasped, as her closest look failed to discover the almost imperceptible heaving of the chest. "You would not deceive me; and surely I heard him scream but a little while ago?"

Miss Burton was standing by her side, and hastened to assure her that Willie still lived. And while she spoke, a convulsive movement passed from head to foot, and the face contracted, as if with pain. This lasted for a moment, and then came moans and screams which brought every one to his bedside, only to look on in distressed pity, for nothing as yet tried had seemed very much to lessen this pain. It went off gradually as it had begun, and the poor little fellow again became unconscious. These alternations had been his condition from the first, with a few short intervals, when he would arouse, and seem quite natural. If it had not been for these intervals, his case would have

appeared almost hopeless, at least in the eyes of those who could not look upon it understandingly. Even the doctors were very grave, and gave no decided opinion. But they agreed that as these cessations of pain and stupor were slightly longer, and his suffering was, at least, no greater, there was ground for hope that his vigorous constitution might bring him safely through the danger.

Mr. Burton and his sister, who had been immediately summoned, were of course greatly alarmed, and an eminent physician from the city had been sent for to consult with the three already in attendance. He was this evening anxiously expected. Mrs. Burton at first insisted upon remaining with her child until his arrival, and hearing from his own lips whether there was not less reason for fear than any one else would allow. But another repetition of the pains and screams was too much for her shattered nerves to bear, and she was carried away, after a violent fit of hysterics, followed by a languor and depression of spirits which caused her friends more uneasiness than they

had yet felt for her. It was a sad household, and a confused one, in spite of Aunt Maria's efforts to keep all quiet below and above stairs. Relatives and neighbours crowded in with offers of help and sympathy, well meant, but some of them annoying from their importunity, and the ignorance of those who made them of the real demands of a sick-room. Leaving one of the most trustworthy in temporary charge of Willie, Aunt Maria herself undertook the soothing of her sister, almost distracted by the buzz of conversation among three or four nurses, who, not having suffered much from nerves themselves, hardly understood what mischief they were doing.

Miss Burton had just succeeded in quieting the sobbing, trembling invalid, when the creaking of a door made her turn suddenly with a look of vexation. It was Jessie, who, pale, and with eyes red and swollen from constant weeping, peeped in. Her aunt signed to her to go away again, and heard her burst into passionate grief as she closed the door. "Poor child! I must try to comfort her," thought

Aunt Maria. She had been too constantly occupied since her arrival the morning before to be able to say more than a few passing words to the sorrowful little girl, whose fears for her mother and brother were sadly aggravated by her remorse for the neglect and procrastination which had led to such unlooked-for and dreadful consequences. Nor had her father said much to her. Jessie had not given him many opportunities, but had shrunk out of sight when he appeared. He could never love her again, she thought. She had refused to do as he wished. It was the same as disobeying; and the fault which so often before had passed unvisited except by some light rebuke or punishment, and so had seemed but a trifling one, now that life-long sorrow might be caused by it, stood out in Jessie's eyes as a terrible sin. Of course her father could not forgive her, for she could not forgive herself. There was but little hope that Willie would not die; "and may-be even mother too," was the thought which came to her when her aunt refused to permit her to enter the room where she had till now been

allowed to come when she chose, and where she had spent most of these sad days, crouching in a corner behind the bed when her father was there.

This idea had not occurred to her since the first shock, for her mother had not been thought in any danger ; but she had heard from some of the turned-out nurses greatly exaggerated accounts of her mother's increased illness, and had come to learn for herself. Aunt Maria's distressed face and her commanding signal seemed to make it certain that these accounts were quite true, and it was no wonder that Jessie lost her self-control, and that her loud lamentations might have been heard throughout the house. They disturbed her mother, and Aunt Maria was obliged to remain some moments longer with her.

Jessie soon remembered that this would not do, and the lady who was with Willie opening her door, and in a loud whisper scolding her for so much noise, helped her to restrain her sobs. "I don't see what you can be thinking of," said the lady. "If you loved your poor

little brother and felt sorry for him, I should think you'd try to be quiet, with him a-dying almost in here. Go away somewhere, directly."

Jessie was quiet, but there was a choking in her throat, and she felt that if she could only scream it would be such a relief. She could not go away, and sat down on the top stair, with her head bowed in her lap.

Presently she heard a light step, an arm was placed around her, and her aunt's voice said softly, "My dear, dear child, I am so sorry for you!"

"Oh, auntie," said Jessie, clinging to her, "is mother so much worse? Will she die, too, like Willie? Oh, can't I go in and see her? They won't let me in to Willie, and now mother is dying too!"

"Hush, hush, dear!" said her aunt, as Jessie's sobs broke out afresh. "Your mother is not very much worse, I hope. But we must keep her as quiet as possible. You will try to control yourself, I know, because if she hears you, she will be roused and have a suffering night. She is asleep now, and I am going to

get Jane to sit with her. Then I shall see if I am wanted with Willie. If not, I will spare a few moments for you. I have hardly spoken to you since I came. Go to my room, dear, and I will try to see you there soon."

"Auntie," said Jessie, as she returned the kiss with which the words were followed, "is Willie dying now? I can't go till I know."

"Oh, no, I trust not," said her aunt, with a startled look. "You may stay here a moment while I go in."

She came back again directly, with the assurance that Willie was about the same. "Then, auntie," said Jessie, "mayn't I go in and see him? Please, please, let me! I haven't been in all day. They won't let me, and I do want to so very much. Just a minute, auntie. I haven't got on noisy shoes, and I'll go on tiptoe and whisper, just like Mrs. Stevens."

"You need not do that, Jessie. No noise seems to disturb poor Willie now. And in any sick-room, my dear, never go on tiptoe or whisper. Walk lightly, and say no more than is necessary; but say that in a low tone, such as I am

using, and you will disturb the patient far less than by the annoying, hissing noise which most persons think it best to make. Remember this when you go in to see your mother, for nervous sick people are often made a great deal worse by their nurses' mistakes. You may go in to see Willie if you will promise not to scream or show your fright in any way if his spasms of pain should come on, for that would alarm your mother, and harm her, though it didn't Willie. Can you be composed, Jessie?"

"Yes, aunt," said Jessie, firmly.

Her aunt opened the door with scarcely a sound. Mrs. Stevens uttered a prolonged, loud "hush—sh—sh," and held up her finger warningly. Jessie, with tears blinding her eyes, gazed on the dear little brother who less than a week ago was so full of life and glee. But she did not sob or cry aloud, and when her aunt said, "Now, dear, you had better go," she quietly obeyed, saying to Mrs. Stevens as she passed, "You see I can be still, and I love Willie more than I can tell." Giving her aunt another kiss in the hall, she went away feeling

more comforted than at any time since the terrible Saturday night.

It was some hours before she saw her aunt again. The physician from the city arrived soon after, and after watching with Willie for a long time, he retired to consult with the other doctors. Mr. Burton and his sister waited in much anxiety to hear the new opinion. It did not differ much from that already given. It was a very dangerous case. The sharp rock near which Willie had been found had undoubtedly been the cause of severe spinal injury. If there could be immediate relief to the brain, there would be chance of life. And provided all went as favourably as possible, the life might be prolonged for years. But there was little hope of there being any thing but years of suffering, or, at best, of inactivity. The pain might give way to remedies, but paralysis of the lower limbs would probably succeed, and Willie be, whether his life was longer or shorter, unable ever to use them again. Still the doctor did not say that this would positively be so, and as Willie seemed slightly better under his care,

Mr. Burton would not allow himself to think that this result was inevitable, but feeling great confidence in Dr. Simpson's management, placed his little boy at once in his hands, and urged him to remain in his house altogether for the present, promising to pay any sum that might be demanded as the price of his child's cure. "I would sell every thing I possess, and make any sacrifice, rather than that any thing should be left undone," he said.

Dr. Simpson could not give up his whole time; but he would stay for a day or two to watch the case, and come afterwards as often as possible. The little patient certainly seemed relieved; and as the doctor, after visiting Mrs. Burton, and pronouncing her doing very well, returned to Willie, and seated himself by the bedside for the rest of the night, Mr. Burton urged his sister to take some rest. It was already after twelve, and she had not lain down since her arrival. He would stay with the doctor. Jane and a kind neighbour were with Mrs. Burton. "Aunt Maria must go to bed. She looked worn out."

Finding that she was not needed, Aunt Maria obeyed her own rule in nursing, always to take rest when possible, and feeling, now that she had time to think of it, very tired, she went to her room. She had quite forgotten that she had sent Jessie to await her there. The poor child, also worn out with sorrow and fatigue, had thrown herself on the foot of the bed, and was asleep. Not very soundly, though, for she half aroused at her aunt's entrance, and murmured, "My darling Willie!" Aunt Maria did not disturb her, but, placing a pillow under her head, lay down beside her, and soon fell asleep herself.

She was awakened by the sound of the closing of a door, and saw by the light she had left burning that it was Jessie who had just come in. "What is it?" she cried, starting up. "Willie? Your mother? Are they any worse?"

"No, auntie," said Jessie. "They're just the same,—at least mother is, and that new doctor says that Willie is a little better." Jessie had a smile on her face, and yet she burst

into tears. "Oh, auntie," she sobbed, "if Willie only could get well, I'd never want anything else in this world! I had such a dreadful dream about him. I thought he was dead, and I saw him just as he looked to-night, all so white and beautiful. But he never could move again, nor smile, nor speak to me. Oh, it frightened me so! And I got up and went to see. I'm sorry I made you wake up, auntie, when you were so tired, but I couldn't keep still."

"Never mind, dear," said her aunt, as she rose from the bed. "I believe I'll go myself and see how the sick people are getting on. What time is it, I wonder?"

"It just struck three, auntie. And father asked if you were asleep, and seemed glad, and said you mustn't get up till morning. And mother's very quiet, and Jane's taking good care of her, and so is Mrs. Bates. So don't go, auntie, please. I'm so lonely here without any body. Do stay with me, please!"

Jessie's "please" was very winning. As she looked up with a mournful smile, her aunt

drew her to her side. "Certainly, poor child!" she said, "if you need me more than any body else does, I'll stay with you. I suppose you have been lonely these two or three days, for every one has been so busy that you have been quite neglected. I will stay with you now, but I can't promise to keep awake," she continued, smiling, "for my eyes are not so wide open as yours are. I think we had both better lie down again and go to sleep."

"I'm not a bit sleepy," said Jessie; "and, auntie, I wanted to ask you something very much. Only I suppose you ought to rest now. I'll wait till——" Jessie checked herself with a sigh. "Never mind now, auntie."

"I am rather sleepy," said her aunt, whose eyes were closing. "Come and lie down, Jessie, and to-morrow you shall tell me all you wish. I will make time to hear you."

Jessie said no more, and her aunt had been for some time asleep, when she was once more aroused. Jessie was crying and sobbing so violently that her aunt was alarmed. "What is it, my child?" she said, putting her arm over

her. "Hush, dear! Have you had another bad dream?"

"Oh, no, it isn't a dream," said Jessie. "I can't get asleep. I didn't mean to wake you up again, auntie; but, oh, now that you are awake, do please tell me something! For I dare not put it off till to-morrow."

Aunt Maria was thoroughly awake now. She rose, and getting a shawl for herself and one for Jessie, she made the sobbing child sit beside her in a wide easy-chair, and drawing down her head on her shoulder, pressed her closely to her side. "Now, my dear," she said, "I am ready to listen to you, and to answer your questions. But answer one of mine first. Why do you not dare to put off what you wish to say till to-morrow?"

"Oh, because, auntie," sobbed Jessie, "I want to know so very much, and putting off is so wrong. I'll never dare to do it any more. Oh, it's that that has made all this dreadful trouble! Do you know all about it, auntie?"

"Your father told me something," replied her aunt.

“Then you know how I disobeyed him about the garden, and would go to the—the dreadful mountain——”

“Don’t talk of it, Jessie, if it affects you so much,” said her aunt, soothing her. “You must not make yourself sick now.”

“Oh, but I must talk of it, auntie,” said Jessie. “I think and think, and then I feel so much worse. And I want to tell you how very sorry I am for that, and for the other, which was ’most as bad. I mean not coming to mother when she called me. If I had done so, we would have gone away before that terrible peddler’s——”

Jessie broke off again. Her aunt said nothing, only pressed her hand. Presently Jessie went on. “I am so very, very sorry, and I wanted to ask you if I was sorry enough. Do you think God will forgive me, and not make—make Willie die? And won’t you please ask him, auntie, for me, because I don’t know how to do so myself very well? And do it now, and not wait till morning, because he might die before then.”

"What shall I say for you, Jessie?"

"Oh, you know, auntie. That I'm so sorry, and to let my darling Willie live."

"I will pray for you, my child; but you must pray for yourself. And if you are really repentant, God will forgive you. But he may not let Willie live."

"Oh, why not? I thought if people were sorry enough, and prayed to God, he would certainly hear them and give them what they wanted."

"Then why didn't you pray to him yourself?"

"I have, auntie, some. But I have been so wicked, I'm afraid he won't hear me, because may-be I'm not sorry enough. And for all my praying Willie only gets worse."

"Worse? I thought you said last night he was better?"

"Yes, he was then. But afterwards, I went again and listened at the door, for I didn't like to knock, and I heard the doctor say something that made me think Willie was worse. Any way, he doesn't get well, and that's what I

want. And so I thought I'd ask you to pray to God, because he'll hear you, for you don't do wicked things like me."

Her aunt sighed. "Not like you, perhaps, Jessie. But wicked things enough."

"Do you?" asked Jessie. "I never knew it. Except," she added, "sometimes you used to be——"

"Cross?" said her aunt. "Yes, we all have our faults and our sins which come between us and God. He could never hear us, Jessie, if it were not for the merciful Jesus who pleads for us at his right hand. For his sake God listens to us—not for our own. No matter how sorry we may be, that can never be enough. Only in the name of our Saviour may we come and confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. You did not forget that, did you, my dear, when you prayed."

"No, auntie. I know we must say, 'For Jesus Christ's sake.' But God won't forgive us, and do what we want, unless we are very sorry, and I was afraid I wasn't enough sorry. How can I tell, auntie, how sorry to be?"

“You must be so sorry, Jessie, that you will earnestly endeavour never to commit the offence again.”

“I think I am as sorry as that,” said Jessie, “But, oh, dear, I can’t tell, because I’ve often thought I was sorry, and yet I did the same thing again. Now I feel almost sure that I shall never, never put off my work again, because I shall not dare to. But may-be I might. I’m afraid to promise. When you went away, auntie, I did resolve to be real good. I meant to study and keep all your ‘rules.’ But I didn’t. I **just** kept getting worse and worse, and now, this is the end of it! Oh, auntie, I wish you had stayed! Then I don’t believe it would have happened.”

“Perhaps it would, Jessie. You know I gave you liberty of choice once, and you chose to delay. And if my ‘rules’ were the only things that kept you from being naughty, they were perhaps doing as much harm as good. If a person does right only because he is forced to do it, he will not continue to be good when he is no longer obliged. No, I should not give

you so many 'rules' again, Jessie, if I were to have charge of you."

"Then I'd be sure to be in trouble all the time," said Jessie. "I think the 'rules' are best. I was always happiest when I minded them."

"'Rules' are very good things. But they are better when we make them for ourselves, and keep them, than when they are made for us."

"But I never can keep my own 'rules.' I've tried and tried, and I never can."

"Because you have tried in your own strength, Jessie."

"But I did ask God sometimes."

"And did he not help you?"

"I don't know. I used to do bad things just the same."

"My dear child, I fear that you did not remember, what I have so often told you, that before you can approach God as a reconciled Father you must have a 'new heart and a right spirit.' You must feel that God has accepted you, because Christ's righteousness has been

imputed to you, and your sins have been imputed to, or laid upon, him !”

“Indeed, aunt, I think that I did ask something like this.”

“Then you did not ask aright. The Bible tells us that if we ‘ask and receive not,’ it is because we ‘ask amiss.’ I am afraid you were careless in your prayers, Jessie. You did not ask earnestly enough. You did not really *want* what you asked for. God will not answer such prayers. We must be in earnest when we pray. We must feel the need of what we ask; we must believe that God can give it to us, and we must plead what Christ has done for us as the reason. You have not prayed in this way, Jessie, or your prayers would have been answered. So you went on in your own strength, and it was nothing but weakness. We will always fall, if we do not reach out for God’s hand to hold us up.”

Jessie began to cry again. “That makes me think,” she said, “of what you told me once about Willie’s falling down when he was learning to walk. Oh, aunt, perhaps even if

he lives, he'll never be able to walk any more!"

"How do you know that?" asked her aunt, quickly. "Has anybody told you?"

"I heard the doctor and father talking about it. And father said he'd almost rather have Willie die. I wouldn't. It would be terrible to know that he couldn't walk, but any thing is better than to have him die. Oh, I can't have that!"

"Jessie," said her aunt, "you asked me just now how you could tell whether you really repented of a fault or a sin. And I told you that you must be so sorry as not to wish to do it again. But there is something more. You must be willing to submit to the punishment."

"Oh, how can I? If God should punish me by taking away my Willie——"

"Even then, dear, you must submit," said her aunt. "It would be very hard——"


"Ah, auntie, if it makes *you* cry, think what it must be for me, when it's my fault! Oh, I don't want Willie to die! Don't you think God will let him live if we both, and father

and mother, and everybody, ask him just in that way you said? I'm sure we all want it, and we will ask for Jesus Christ's sake."

Perhaps he will, dear. You and I will ask him now. But we must also say, 'Thy will be done,'—not ours, unless it is his. God knows how anxious we all are for the life of our dear Willie, and if it is *best*, he will certainly let him be spared to us. God is a merciful, loving Father, who never denies what is good for us. So we will ask him, and trust in his mercy and love, and then, whether our darling lives or dies, it shall be well."

CHAPTER XV.

IMPROVEMENT.

Y the last of October a favourable alteration had taken place in little Willie's condition. There had been gradual amendment under Dr. Simpson's care. Willie still suffered much severe pain, but the more alarming part of his disease, the affection of the brain, had yielded to the remedies, although he yet slept much longer and more soundly than was natural. But when awake, and not tortured with pain, there was a return of something like the sweet, merry, playful Willie of before. He could not walk nor even sit up: the motion of his limbs brought on the suffering; but he could be lifted carefully and held on a pillow. His mother was now quite recovered from the effects of the accident, so far as bodily injuries went. But

her mind had received a shock which it still felt. She was nervous and incapable of having any care or trouble. Nearly her whole attention was given to Willie. She was continually with him, striving in every way to minister to his wants and afford him ease. Willie was very fond of his mother; but though he would laugh and play with her, as she hung over his couch, he much preferred being held in the lap of Jane. She had been his faithful attendant almost from the first. She was a nurse by instinct. Even Aunt Maria observed her quiet, handy, soothing ways with admiration, and took several lessons from her. She was strong and gentle. Mr. Burton himself could not lift Willie more tenderly or more wisely. He could not, of course, leave his business for more than several short periods each day, and as Mrs. Burton had not strength, and Willie so evidently chose Jane even in place of his aunt, who was more of a stranger to him, by common consent Jane had exchanged her place downstairs for the room which Willie had not yet left.

No one was more delighted with the change in her brother than Jessie. She believed that God had granted her prayer. It was true that Willie was not well. But was he not still spared? and was he not improving every day? As to his limbs, she hoped—she was almost sure—that they would get better. Already there was less pain in them. Perhaps by spring he would walk again, with crutches, at any rate, if not able to run about as joyously and quickly as he used to do. Dr. Simpson did not say it could not be, in answer to her eager questions. He smiled, and said they would “hope for the best.” And so Jessie did hope, and the encouragement it gave her made her happier than she would once have thought it possible for her to be again. For it seemed as if God had forgiven her, as her father had done long ago. Jessie’s repentance was sincere. She really hated now the thought of the fault which had brought its own dreadful punishment—dreadful, even though there was no little grave to be wept over, with the feeling that never more on earth could she make any atonement to the

dear one laid beneath its sod. Jessie's imagination had pictured that scene, and she had thought it too terrible to be borne. God had mercifully spared her so great a punishment. Yet what she had to bear was very heavy, Jessie thought. The pain and distress every one had felt, the shock to her mother, the almost constant suffering of her innocent little brother, and the knowledge that, in spite of her hopes, this trouble might last for years, even his whole life, were enough to give Jessie many, many sorrowful hours. The affection which sank so deeply in her heart was working there. She was becoming more thoughtful, and now seldom forgot what she was told. And still more seldom did she ask to put off any task. Often the desire would spring up, it is true, for habits can not be uprooted in a few weeks. But instantly came the remembrance of her former sin, and not trusting now to her own unaided efforts, she sought strength, and it was given. Occasionally she would be taken unawares. But this never occurred when she was with Willie. His presence could scarcely fail to

remind her, and feeling much safer there, and being anxious, at the same time, to do even the least thing for him, she spent most of her time by his side.

Aunt Maria had not yet gone away. Her assistance seemed needed almost as much as at first, for Mrs. Burton thought of little except her boy, and Jane's duties having been assumed by a very different person, there was plenty to oversee and to do in household affairs. And Aunt Maria was always welcome in the sick-room. Mrs. Burton depended on her advice, Willie brightened as she came near, and Jessie loved nothing better than to bespeak her certain sympathy and help.

But, to everybody's regret, she began to talk of leaving them. She had come from home very suddenly, and some matters there required attention. Mr. Burton wished very much that she should settle them, and then return for the winter, at least. "How we shall get on without you, I don't know," he said, one day, when they were talking over the subject. "I believe you are spoiling us all, and that we shall be as

helpless when you go as poor Jessie was after the 'Roll of Honour.'"

"Ah," said his sister, shaking her head with a smile, "I am afraid I was not altogether wise about her. I should have taught her to rely more upon herself, and not have left her so little choice whether she would obey or not."

"I don't know," said Mr. Burton. "I have been blaming myself since the occurrence of this dreadful accident for allowing her that liberty which she abused. If I had told her decidedly to remain and do her work, she would have done so. Then all this evil would have been saved."

"Yet I cannot doubt that the lesson will be of lasting good to her. Jessie is quite old enough to decide for herself between good and evil. She can never gain strength if continually propped by our positive commands and rules. For the past month I can see that she has made more improvement than during the same time before. Then, indeed, she really made none. She would not exert her own powers, because she knew that I would and

could prevent her from failure. Now that I only guide, not drive her, she is seeking far better aid than I can give, and I believe that she will, in that strength, conquer her besetting sin—or sins: for idleness is almost as much her torment as delay. That, just now, I am not able to help her much with, for she is so engaged with Willie, that, though she is often not actually required there, and I think she should be occupied in some way, I can't find it in my heart to call her from the room. And she may be—is, I hope—learning better lessons there than I could teach. This constant reminder of her fault is making her deeply conscious of her sinfulness and weakness. And if Jessie is saved from the bitter sorrow to which persistent delay is leading so many, we shall have reason to be thankful that good has been brought out of evil."

There was a pause of a few moments. Then Mr. Burton said, "Willie seems better to-day than yesterday, I think."

"Yes, so do I," replied his sister. He certainly does not go back at all. But his case is

such a very peculiar one. I am not sure that Dr. Simpson altogether understands it."

"Nor I. But there is no one else in whom I have as much confidence, and he evidently does his best for him. I am afraid his prediction will be fulfilled, and that if Willie is relieved from suffering, it will be only at the expense of the power to use his limbs."

"Better that than such wearing pain," said Aunt Maria. "Have you received an answer yet to the letter you sent to Paris, describing the case fully to Judge Lansing, and asking him to obtain the opinion of the surgeon who is helping him so much?"

"Not yet. I should have heard before this. The letter must have been delayed."

The last word was caught by Jessie, as she came into the room with a bright, eager face. She stopped, and the brightness was succeeded by so downcast a look, that both aunt and father asked directly, "What is the matter?"

"Oh," said Jessie, tears filling her eyes, "I forgot all about what you told me, auntie! I've just thought of it now. I meant to do it

right away, but I stopped to see if Willie wanted any thing, and then I forgot. I'm *very* sorry. I'll go and do it now. Oh no, I can't, either, for mother told me to go down and buy some maple sugar for Willie. He's so much better to-day! He had a little sugar, and he liked it so much, and wanted more. It was all gone; but mother said I could ask father for some money and get some more. And we were so pleased, mother and Jane and I, to see him so bright and cunning, and I was almost happy again. But now I've done wrong again. I'll never, never be good. It's no use to try."

"You must not feel so, my dear," said her father. "You will fail sometimes, but you must not be discouraged, but seek forgiveness, and try more earnestly. You are trying, I know. Your aunt and I both see great improvement in you lately. You must not stop now, Jessie."

Jessie looked up from her aunt's shoulder, where she had hid her face. "No, I don't want to stop, father. I want to go on, but I do forget so often. Twice to-day. I shall have a

whole paper full by the end of the week, auntie."

"Never mind, dear," consoled her aunt, as Jessie's head went down again. "Never mind. If you only keep trying, the paper will not be so very full, I hope. But we can't expect to conquer all our faults at once. Our whole life must be a battle with sin. We shall all have many papers full, I am afraid, and nothing but our earnest repentance and Christ's blood can wash out the sinful record. But *that* can and will. So take heart again, dear, and let us see you bright and happy once more, as when you came in. You looked like the old Jessie then. And now oughtn't you to go on your errand?"

"Oh, yes," said Jessie, starting up. "I have stayed too long now. But I had to tell you. And I'm glad I did, for you've made me feel almost happy again. You always make me feel that way, auntie, now."

"What does Jessie mean by her 'paper full?'" asked her father when she was gone.

"Only a little plan of mine," said her aunt, "for her to write down each day every instance

of her fault which she can recall. I think it is doing her good."

"And what did she neglect, which caused her those tears?"

"My request that she should learn a lesson in geography. She is idle, as I told you. And I don't like to have her doing nothing at her studies. She is quite willing herself to study, and says she wishes to begin school again."

"Yes," said Mr. Burton, "she said something to me about it the other day."

"And shall you not send her? Though I hardly see how she can be spared, if I go home, as I think I must. Yet her lessons are very necessary, too."

"Maria," said her brother, "I wish you could see that it is your duty to stay with us. We all need you. Jessie is not old enough to oversee the house, and she wants your constant care herself. I am afraid I cannot afford to send her back to the academy. My expenses have been very heavy, and I must retrench wherever possible. But I have not time to attend to

Jessie's studies, which, as you say, are so important. Her idleness has made her backward. Her mother has her hands full with Willie. So, unless you take pity on the poor child, I don't know what we shall do."

Miss Burton looked thoughtful. "I will consider the matter further," she said. "Certainly you all here have the first claim. But there are others. On some accounts it seems needful for me to go. But I will try to decide for the best.

The General had also been a sufferer on the unfortunate day of his headlong flight. He had lamed himself, but not very seriously, and was now nearly as well as ever. Jessie's fondness for him had been turned into dislike, though she knew it was foolish and unreasonable to regard him as in any way to blame for the consequences of his fright. If she had been in the carriage to soothe and hold him, he would not have given way to his fear. Jessie saw and acknowledged that she alone was in fault. Still, for a long time she could not bear to think of the pony, even after the change for

the better in her mother and Willie allowed her mind to dwell on other things than their troubles.

But lately she had begun to feel an interest again in her former constant friend. She was afraid it was cruel to have neglected him so long. Joe, however, had taken excellent care of him, and when, one evening, Jessie made a great effort, and went to the stable for the first time for several weeks, the General was trotted out to show her that he was only a little the worse for the accident. Jessie patted and stroked him kindly, but felt that never, at least till Willie should be quite well, should she wish to drive him any more. The very thought of driving was still painful to her. As far as her own pleasure was concerned, the loss of the little carriage, which had been entirely ruined, was of no consequence at all. She could not now, perhaps never should, feel enjoyment in being seated in it again. So Jessie had at first scarcely cared for the deprivation of the beautiful little vehicle of which she had been so proud. But there was another consideration

which made her very uneasy. It seemed as though the trouble which she had caused would never end. Katie's carriage must of course be replaced, now that it was destroyed, as her book had been. But there was a great difference, she found, between a carriage and a book. Jessie had spoken to her father about it, expecting him to agree with her that another must be bought directly. To her surprise and dismay, he had said that no doubt it ought to be done, but that he could not do it. "I have not a hundred or a hundred and fifty dollars to spare now," he said, when Jessie asked the reason. "Nor shall I be able to do so for a long time," he continued. "I have had to spend so much money on account of this accident, that I shall have to be very prudent, and money for carriages is not to be thought of."

"But, father, what shall I do?" Jessie asked, in perplexity and distress. "Katie will expect another. I promised to take great care of her carriage. What will she say? Oh, this is ever so much worse than the book! Can't you possibly get one, father, if I should go without a

great many things? And will it cost so much as you said?"

"Yes, Jessie. It was a very perfect little thing, and could not, I think, be replaced for less—perhaps even more—than a hundred and fifty dollars. You would have to go without a good many parasols, wouldn't you, to get that?"

"Oh, don't laugh, father," said Jessie. "It's real trouble, I think. Nothing like the other, of course, but very bad. Why, father, you *must* get a carriage, musn't you? I don't think it would be honest not to."

"Nor I, Jessie. As you say, I must get one, but I cannot do it now."

"Well, pretty soon, then, father, won't you? Just as soon as you can. I'll go without every thing I possibly can. And my things cost a good deal, father. Mother says so, because I wear them out fast. But I'll take great care of my shoes and every thing, and may-be by the time Katie comes home you can save enough to buy the carriage. Don't you think so? I should be so ashamed not to have one to give her."

"I am afraid you will have to bear that consequence of your faults, as well as the other much more sad ones, Jessie," said her father. "I shall buy the carriage as soon as possible, of course, but it may not be by the time Katie returns; though I will try to do so."

"Thank you, dear father," said Jessie. "I know it's all my fault, and I am so sorry that you should have to be troubled about it. And I'll help as much as I can. I won't have a single new dress this winter. Mother can alter my old ones so that they will do."

Her father smiled. "Yes, you must help, Jessie. If you are very economical it will save something. We shall all have to be very saving this winter. But if you learn to be careful and frugal, it will do you good instead of harm. There is one thing for which I am sorry not to have so much money as usual. You will not be able to go to school."

"Not go to school, father? Not to the academy? Oh, I am so sorry!"

"Why, Jessie, it is something new to hear you express sorrow at not going to school!

Your sorrow used to be the other way. Wasn't it just before vacation that you begged so hard to stay at home?"

"Yes, father," said Jessie, looking mortified; "but I was foolish and naughty then. I really want to go now. That is, as soon as Willie gets a little better. But then, after all, he sleeps so much in the morning that I needn't stay with him. And I do want to study now, father. I'm ashamed to know so little. Joe can read quite well now. He does so nicely at school! He showed me his book this afternoon, and I wouldn't believe, at first, he was over so far. It made me think about the hare and the tortoise, father. And I want to study, too, for fear he'll catch up to me."

"Yes," said her father, smiling, as Jessie did, "Joe does very well indeed. He seems to have great fondness for his books, now that he has made a beginning. He will be an excellent scholar, I think, and I should not wonder if we heard of him in something besides gardening by-and-by. And I am glad that you want to learn too, and are ready to acknowledge that

your lessons are important as well as Joe's. You thought once, you know, that your own were only tiresome and not of much consequence."

"Oh, that was ever so long ago," said Jessie. "Last summer—before vacation. I was young and foolish then."

"And now you are old and wise, I suppose," said her father, with another smile.

"I feel real old sometimes," said Jessie, seriously. "Since that dreadful time, and we have had so much trouble, I feel almost grown up sometimes. It's strange, but I do. I don't care half so much for play as I used to."

"Well, that is quite natural, Jessie," said her father, this time with a sigh. "Real trouble makes us all feel old. If it only makes us wise as well, it will be a good thing."

"I'm afraid I'm not very wise yet," said Jessie. "But at least I'm wise enough to want to go to school. I don't like to know so little. Joe asked me to-day where Cork was, and I'd never heard of it. I told him I didn't think it was a place at all, because it was put into

bottles. But he said he heard somebody say they came from there. So I asked Aunt Maria, and she told me. But she laughed at me, and I don't like that. And I know it's wicked not to improve my time."

"Yes, Jessie, that idea is a wise one, at any rate. And you had better begin to improve your time directly. Aunt Maria says you are not needed much with Willie, and she will attend to your lessons as long as she stays. If she goes, I don't quite know how we shall manage. Perhaps I will be your teacher."

"Am I really not going to the academy, then, father? Oh, I am very sorry, because I meant to do so much better than I did. I meant to study hard and get into the 'Roll of Honour' every time, and get prizes. I didn't try much before vacation, because it didn't seem worth while; but I made up my mind to work very hard when school began again. And now when I really do think I should do better, I can't."

"You must not wish to do right only in your own way, Jessie. If you are in earnest in de-

siring to improve, you can show it by being diligent at home just as well as at school. And your industry and perseverance, without the hope of any other reward than that which comes from doing your duty, would give me much more satisfaction than if you were trying, as before, for the honour and praise of others. I should be much more sure that your amendment was real, and that you would continue to do right. So, if you wish to please me, Jessie, and prove your desire to do better, you will profit by the instruction I hope to prevail on your aunt to give you this winter. I think it will be pleasant for you. You are fond of her now, and——”

“Oh, yes,” said Jessie; “if I can’t go to school, I’d rather study with her than any body. And I like her more than all the teachers in the academy put together. It isn’t that. Only I did want to show them all that I wasn’t stupid. But I suppose it’s too late now. I wish I’d studied better before.”

Jessie sighed.

“Yes,” said her father, “it is too late now.

You have wasted your opportunities, and, like many others, you must find that regret will not bring them back to you again. It is one of the penalties of procrastination that 'too late' so often prevents our fulfilling what has been left undone. But I don't want to reproach you, nor to lead you to suppose that your opportunities are all gone. By no means. Here is another now offered you to redeem the time, and though you cannot show your schoolmates that you are equal to them, and no doubt it will be a trial to know that they may think you incapable of being so, yet do your duty bravely and bear the trial with patience, and the result will be a far greater improvement than you could make at school. You will try to do this, Jessie?"

"Yes, father, I will. Still, I'm very sorry about school. Of course, I'll try to please you and Aunt Maria. But I can't help feeling disappointed."

CHAPTER XVI.

EARNING A CARRIAGE.

ANOTHER disappointment awaited Jessie which made the loss of the opportunity to retrieve her character at school seem a less trying thing to bear. A few days after her conversation with her father, and before Aunt Maria had yet decided whether she could remain, the expected letter came from Paris. Its contents were the cause of still further change of plans for the winter. Judge Lansing was so much better as to write himself. The surgeon to whom he had shown his friend's statement had taken great interest in it, and had said, after careful consideration, that, in his opinion, the case had not been rightly treated from the first. His own method would have been quite different, and, while not wishing to excite too strong hopes, he was nearly confident

that he could benefit the little patient greatly, if not work a complete cure. But it would of course be necessary that he should be with him; and the experiment would take some months.

Judge Lansing strongly recommended the skilful and learned man who had almost, as it seemed, restored him from the grave. And after much sympathy for the distress caused by Willie's sad accident, as strongly urged that, if possible, Mr. Burton should bring him at once where there was, at least, so much hope of his recovery.

Mr. Burton was thrown into sad perplexity by this advice. The journey, at first thought, seemed impossible. He could not afford it. Then, how could Willie bear the fatigue and exposure of the long voyage? It must be given up. Yet, as his father watched the suffering of the poor child, still so violent, and thought that there might be relief, he felt that there must be some way open to reach it. For the few days past Willie had certainly not improved. Dr. Simpson confessed that he could do little more for him. The threatened paraly-

sis was, in his opinion, not far distant. On being consulted as to the Paris surgeon, he counselled, as strongly as Judge Lansing, that he should be tried, and thought that, with extreme care, Willie could be taken. Clearly it was the only thing to be done. The expense was the greatest obstacle. Mr. Burton would gladly give up his business for the winter, but, as he had told his sister, the cost already of all this sickness seemed to make it the more necessary for him to stay. Mrs. Burton and Jane would have to accompany the little boy, and the journey, the stay in Paris, and the surgeon's fees could not amount to less than two or three thousand dollars—perhaps more. Mr. Burton had not this sum. He was very much opposed to borrowing, but in this extreme case he feared he must resort to it, for his child's life was at stake.

He was much troubled while uncertain what to do. But he finally came to the conclusion that it would be best to go. The money would be provided, he was confident. He intended to take measures to procure it immediately, and

the journey must be begun with as little delay as possible, since the weather was now becoming unsettled and dangerous for crossing the ocean.

His sister had been listening to his plans. He would rent his house, for return before spring was unlikely. His business must be confided to a friend, and Mrs. Burton, Willie, and Jane were to be ready as soon as it could be managed. "Of course Aunt Maria would stay and help them? She was the only one to be depended upon."

Aunt Maria was very willing to give her assistance. "What is to become of Jessie?" she asked. "You seem to have made no provision for her."

"Poor child!" said Mr. Burton, "the unhappy cause of all this difficulty; she had actually escaped my mind altogether in settling it. I wish I could take her with me. She will feel the separation from her brother so much. But that is not to be thought of. No unnecessary expense must be incurred. So what is to become of her I don't know, as I told you the other day, unless you take pity on her."

Miss Burton returned her brother's smile.

"I see she must go home with me," she said. "Well, you need not feel any uneasiness about her, for I shall try to do my best."

"I have entire confidence in you," said her brother, pressing her hand. "You are always laying us under obligations. I have no doubt Jessie will improve with you, and be as happy as she can be anywhere away from that darling brother whom she loves so dearly. But I suppose she will be disappointed when she finds that she is to be left behind."

Jessie was indeed nearly inconsolable. "Oh, it is almost as bad as when I thought he was going to die!" she said, with tears running down her cheeks. "All winter long to be without Willie! And how do I know that doctor in Paris will cure him? I thought Dr. Simpson would. And may-be this one won't help him either, and then he will die away off there, and I will never see him again!"

Her aunt tried to give her some comfort. Jessie for a long time refused to hope that Willie could be restored to her. After a while,

however, as she listened to her aunt's cheerful description of a possible future scene,—in which Willie, as well and as active as ever, should run to meet her, and all the pain of parting be forgotten in the joy of seeing him and her father and mother after the long separation, and of hearing of all the wonderful things of Paris, perhaps having some of them for her own,—Jessie brightened a little, though still declaring that it was very cruel to keep her from going with her dear Willie. “I know I shall not be a bit happy this winter,” she said, mournfully, “with everybody that I love so far away. And then I should like so much to see Paris myself. Katie says it's so funny to hear even the babies speak French! I do wish I could go! But I always have to stay at home. I did so last summer when they went to the city, and I always have to.”

“But you didn't have such a ‘miserable time’ as you expected last summer,” said Aunt Maria, “and so——”

“How did you know I thought I'd have a miserable time?” asked Jessie, colouring.

“Your mother told me you said so,” replied her aunt. “You thought you would be so lonely, and ‘Aunt Maria would be so cross,’ that you could not fail to be very unhappy. But, on the whole, I don’t think you had so much trouble as you looked for.”

“Oh,” said Jessie, with another blush, “I didn’t know much about you then, and so I was afraid you wouldn’t be nice at all. But I love you now, and I don’t mean, auntie, that I don’t want to go and stay with you. But then, of course, you know I can’t help wanting to go with father and mother and Willie. And then I’d see Katie, and be with her too. Only,” continued Jessie, her face reddening again, “I’m afraid I’d be ashamed to see her, and have to tell her all about that dreadful time, and how I caused it. And then the General is lame yet, and father hasn’t got the carriage. Oh, dear! I’m afraid he’ll never get it now, when he has to spend so much money to go to Paris! Oh, I do wish father wasn’t so poor! If he was only rich, like the judge, he could buy a splendid carriage, and every thing, and I could go!

Why don't God give everybody plenty of money, auntie?"

"I don't know certainly why, Jessie. Only because it is not best, I suppose."

"Well, I wish he would give father some more. For it must be best to have enough to make Willie well. And then the carriage. Money helps all kinds of trouble, don't it?"

"Yes, it helps. But it don't prevent trouble, Jessie. If you had had a million of dollars of your own in the bank the day the General ran away, it could not have kept your mother and Willie from being hurt."

"No," said Jessie. "But I wish I had a million of dollars. Then we'd all go to Paris: you, too, auntie! And we'd buy every thing they had to sell. Katie says the things are lovely. But I haven't got any money, so I'll have to stay. Auntie, have you got a nice house? You don't live in the same one, do you, that you did when I was there? That's a *very* long time ago. More than two years."

"I think my new house is a very pleasant one, Jessie. And I hope we shall have a good

time there. If I try not to be 'cross,' and you not to be 'miserable,' we shall get on very well, I dare say. Only, Jessie, I want to prepare you for one thing, which may cause you some trouble, unless you make up your mind to be wise."

"Is it lessons, aunt? I shan't mind them. Will I go to school? But I suppose not, because of father's not having the money."

"No; we shall study together, you and I, Jessie. I shall expect that you will be a very bright scholar, and make me no trouble at all."

"No, I won't, auntie,—I mean, I won't make any trouble. I don't believe I'll need the 'rules and regulations' one bit, I'm so very sure I'm going to be so different from what I was before. I'll take advice now, every time."

"Don't be too sure, Jessie," said her aunt, smiling. "However, I believe you are different, and if you try to do your duty and look to God for his help, I think we may dispense with most of the 'rules.' But the lessons were not what I meant. I shall not have so much

money this winter as I have had, and I must go without some things."

"Oh, auntie, are you poor, too? I thought you had as much money as you wanted."

"I shall have as much as I want, Jessie,—enough for us both, if I am prudent. But I intend to be very economical."

"'Economical?' That means not to spend any thing, don't it? Father said I must be that, and then he'd save all his money—all he'd buy my things with, I mean—to get the carriage. But now I suppose he won't. And oh, dear! how will we get it?"

"How would you like to earn it, Jessie?"

"Earn it, aunt? ~How could I? By working?"

"Yes."

"But what could I do? Mother used to pay me ten cents, sometimes, for sewing things. But I do hate,—no, father said I mustn't use that word any more,—I don't prefer sewing, aunt. And then I'd never be able to get a hundred and fifty dollars,—not if I worked all winter."

"Is that all the little carriage would cost?" asked her aunt.

"All, aunt! I think it's enough. If I've got to earn it, it is, any way," said Jessie, laughing. "How could I possibly, aunt?"

"Well, Jessie, if you'll listen to me for a moment, I'll show you. I said I should be very economical this winter, and do without some things which I have had hitherto. One of these things is the help of my faithful Betty and her little girl. So——"

"Betty, aunt?" interrupted Jessie. "Is that the woman mother told me about, that came to you one time long ago, all miserable and wretched one cold night, with a poor little baby half starved and frozen, and that you took in and was so kind to, and let her stay always afterwards?"

"Yes, Jessie; but I don't think you are very polite this afternoon with your interruptions. I shan't get through before it is time for you to set the tea-table, unless you allow me to go on."

"Well, I won't interrupt again," said Jessie.

"I only wanted to know if it was the same one. I suppose the baby must be quite big now?"

"Yes, she is a large baby," replied her aunt. "She is as tall as you. And a great help she is to her mother. She sets tables, and sweeps, and goes to the door, and does all my errands, besides washing the dishes when——"

"Oh, I should think she'd hate—I mean, not prefer that!" broke in Jessie, again. "That's the very worst work in the world, *I* think!"

"Then I suppose you would not 'prefer' to do it yourself, Jessie, even though you might earn a carriage by it?"

"I, aunt? Do you want me to wash the dishes?"

"Either you or I have to do it, I suppose, for, as I told you, Betty and Nannie are going away."

"Why, aunt? Where are they going?"

"Betty's brother, whom she had not heard from for years, has just come back from the west, and he wants her to go and live with him. So I must lose her."

"But you can get somebody else, Aunt Maria. There's plenty of servant-girls."

"Not such as I like," returned her aunt, with a smile. "Besides, I am poor, rather, just now. So there will be nobody to do my work this winter but myself, unless you choose to help me, as Nannie did her mother."

Jessie was silent for a few moments. Work was not a pleasant idea to her. Even the nightly setting of the table, which had lately been placed in her charge, was regarded as a disagreeable duty, to be got through with as quickly as possible. And now to Jessie's imagination there arose a long winter to be spent in no one knew what dreadful tasks. Perhaps even the washing and ironing she would have to do!

"Well, Jessie," said her aunt, at length, "is it such a very dismal prospect?"

"I don't think it's very nice, aunt," said Jessie. "But I suppose I must do it if you say so. Only I don't believe I'm strong enough to wash all the clothes."

"No," said her aunt, laughing. "And if

you were, I don't believe I should like your method exactly. Of course I should only want you to do what you are perfectly able for. And I shall pay you, Jessie."

"Pay me, aunt?"

"Yes; that is the way you are to earn the carriage."

"But, aunt, I'm afraid I couldn't do enough work. A hundred and fifty dollars is a great deal. Did you pay Nannie so much?"

"Not quite! I will tell you, Jessie. I don't mean to pay you so much every week or month; but if you will be as useful to me as you possibly can all winter, and try to do your work cheerfully and thoroughly, and *without putting it off*, when spring comes, I will, as a reward, buy you a carriage to give to Katie."

"Oh! will you, aunt? But I thought you were poor? You said so."


"I am not so very poor, Jessie. At any rate, I shall have enough for that, especially if we are very saving. Will you do your part, Jessie? You would like the carriage?"

"Oh, yes, I want that. I must have it.

And you are *very* good, auntie, to give it to me. For I'm sure I couldn't earn near as much as it would cost. I'll try to work as well as I can, and study, and not make you one bit of trouble. I guess we'll have a pretty good time together, auntie, if we are too poor to go to Paris; won't we?"

CHAPTER XVII.

WILLING WORK.

HE days flew by all too rapidly for Jessie, and brought the very one which was to give her the last sight for so many months of her parents and "precious Willie."

This was what she was calling him as she bent over the crib where he lay ready dressed for his journey. His face had lost its round, plump outline. There was no tinge of red in his cheek, but the eyes were as beautiful as ever, and his pretty golden hair clustered over his head in the same soft rings. "I must have one of these," said Jessie, after kissing them times without number. "Oh, mother, if he should not come back, after all, it would be all I'd have to remember him by!"

"You would see them again, at any rate, for

I should not leave them in that far off land," said her mother. "But don't talk so dismally, Jessie. I shall be quite unstrung, and not able to set out."

"Oh, well, I don't really think he'll die," mother," said Jessie, remembering a caution of her father's that her mother must not be agitated. "I'm almost sure you'll both come back strong and well, and Willie able to run as fast as he used to. Can't I hold him a little, mother?"

"You had better go and get ready," said her mother. "It's almost time for the carriage to be here."

"Why, there's most an hour yct!" said Jessie. "Please let me take him just a minute. There's time enough."

"Jessie," said her mother, with a shudder, "I thought I was never to hear you say that again? Don't. You know it makes me think of——"

"Oh, don't think of it, mother!" cried Jessie, with a distressed face. "I forgot. How shall I ever remember? With Willie here, too, to make me think! I've made you nervous,

haven't I? I'm very sorry. Don't think of it any more. I'll go directly."

Miss Burton and Jessie were to accompany the others to the city from which the steamer was to sail, and, after taking leave of them, to go back to the home of the former, which was about a hundred miles in an opposite direction. It would make a long journey, but Jessie and Aunt Maria were so desirous to see the very last of their dear ones, that they were quite willing to undergo the extra fatigue. That, at least, was her aunt's feeling; Jessie thought no journey could possibly be too long. And as to parting with them all one moment before she could help it, that was out of the question.

This day of the departure Aunt Maria had been particularly busy. The numberless "last things" had kept her on her feet since early morning, and while Jessie was with her mother she had slipped away to rest for a few moments before finally setting out. Every thing was entirely ready, and she thought nobody would want her just then.

But one thing had been omitted,—the very

important one of sewing a button on the dress which Jessie was to wear. The dress was on, and fastened except in that place, and Jane declared it did not show in the least. But Jessie thought otherwise. It would never do to have a button off when she was going on such a long journey. There was no needle and thread at hand, and off flew Jessie to her aunt, sure that she would have all that was needed. With a knock and quick "May I come in?" she opened the door. "I beg your pardon, auntie," she said, as she saw her lying on a lounge, and just unclosing her eyes. "I didn't know you were asleep. What a funny time to take a nap! And you are all dressed, too!"

"I was getting a little strength for my work," said her aunt. "Never mind disturbing me, though. Did you want any thing?"

"Yes, aunt; please sew this on, if you've got any thing to do it with. All the things are packed up. Oh, you've got them in your travelling-bag! You always have every thing that any body wants, I believe," said Jessie, admiringly. "And the best of you is, you're always

willing to help everybody," she added, turning to give her aunt a kiss when all was pronounced in complete order. "I don't know but, after all, I would as soon stay with you as go to Paris,—at least, if it wasn't for Willie. But what did you mean by strength for work, aunt? The work's all done, isn't it?"

"The work of the journey, I meant. That is to come yet, you know."

"Oh, aunt, do you call a journey work? It's fun, I think. Oh, father," cried Jessie, as he came to the door, "Aunt Maria thinks a journey is work? Isn't that funny?"

Both her hearers joined in her merry, contagious laugh. "Your aunt looks as though there had been work somewhere about, whether it's in the journey or not," said her father, presently, with a glance of anxious tenderness. She must take care, or she'll have to go to Paris herself to get cured."

"That would be rather more journey work than I could manage just now," returned Aunt Maria. "But though I'm rather tired, I shall soon get rested when I am at home again."



"I'm going to do all the work, and she shall do nothing but lie
on the sofa and rest."

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"Yes," said Jessie, "I mean to make her rest ever so long, father, when we get there. I'm going to do all the work, and she shall do nothing but lie on the sofa and rest."

"You work, Jessie!" exclaimed her father, in a tone of pretended astonishment. "I thought you 'hated' it? I'm sure I heard you say so once or twice in my life. Or else I dreamed it."

"Oh, you didn't dream it!" said Jessie, laughing. "I did hate it; but somehow I don't so much now. And I'm going to work ever so hard at Aunt Maria's. We're not going to have any servants, because she's very poor now."

"No wonder, after——"

"Not *very* poor, Jessie," said Aunt Maria. "Be exact. I didn't tell you '*very*' poor."

"Well, poor enough to have to do all your work. You said that. And I'm going to help you just as much as I can. And, father, what do you think she's going to give me if I'm good all the time? A new carriage for Katie! Isn't she good?"

"I can't allow that, after all the rest that she has done."

He was about to say more, and her aunt also began to speak ; but Jessie went on, " Yes, I know she has done a great deal for us. I don't believe we could,—that is, you could, have gone to Paris without all her help. But then Aunt Maria really loves to help people, I think, and I dare say she would be as glad to give me the carriage as I shall be to have it. So please don't say that, father, for I want it so much. And you know you are too poor to buy me one."

" No, your father must not say that," said Aunt Maria, quickly, before her brother could speak. " You are entirely right, Jessie, in thinking that I shall take pleasure in giving it to you, because, as it is to be the reward of a winter of hard work in conquering faults, when I give it I shall have the happiness of knowing that you have so far overcome those bad habits which have made you and all of us so much trouble and unhappiness, that there will be great cause to hope that they will never do so again. That is a long sentence," added Aunt Maria, taking breath, " and it has not left us time to say more. So, James, if you will be

so good as to strap my trunk, Jessie and I will put on our things. The carriage will be here in five or ten minutes."

"But, Maria, about that other carriage," began Mr. Burton, as he complied. "I really ought not——"

"You 'really ought' not to stop to talk," said his sister, smiling, "or we shall be left. It's a great pleasure to me, James," she continued; "and as I can do it without any inconvenience, you 'really' must let me."

"It's a wonder you have any thing left," said her brother. "Remember, the other is only a loan. I shall not let you give us every thing."

"You know I told you I did not need it in the least, James. But you can repay it if you like."

"Of course I shall," said Mr. Burton. "But I can never repay you for a great many other things,—your help and comfort in all these trying scenes, and what you have done and will do for Jessie. But there is no need to tell you this. You know how I feel."

Aunt Maria only smiled as he left the room. "Father," said Jessie, who went out with him, and who had not quite understood this, "why didn't you want Aunt Maria to buy the carriage? Has she given you some money?"

"She has given, or lent,—for I shall certainly repay her, though I may not be able to do it as soon as I would like,—she has lent me money for the journey, and to pay the doctor who we hope will cure Willie."

"Oh, isn't she good?" said Jessie. "And that's what makes her poor? Oh, I will work, father, and do every thing I can, not so much for the carriage, as to please her and show how grateful I am. For if Willie is cured, it will be her doing; won't it? because if you couldn't take him to Paris, the doctor couldn't help him. But now you can go, and it's all because of Aunt Maria! Oh, I love her dearly, and I'll try ever so hard; and you'll see, father, when you come back, if I am not a better child than I used to be."

"You are *now*, dear," said her father, kissing her. "I feel far less uneasiness about leaving

you now than I should have done six months ago. In fact, I have scarcely any uneasiness, for I hope you have learned the lesson which I have been trying so long to teach you ; and with Aunt Maria to help you remember, and assist you in overcoming your other faults, I shall expect to find you all that I can wish. The General will be another reminder to you, Jessie ; at least, as long as he limps as he does now. And when that is cured, you will be able to take some riding lessons, which will help to make the time pass pleasantly."

"Ah," said Jessie, "I don't know. I'm afraid I'll never want to have any thing to do with the General again. But I'm glad he's to go with us, and Joe to take care of him. I shouldn't like to leave him here. Besides, he's a part of Katie's keepsake. I'm so glad he wasn't killed. Perhaps I will go on with the riding. And, at any rate, he'll be sure to keep me in mind not to put off my work for pleasure. That was what you meant by the lesson ; wasn't it, father?"

"Yes, Jessie, the lesson which God has him-

self been teaching you by all these sad experiences—the lesson of ‘Danger in Delay.’”

And if the penalties of “delay” be often so dreadful in temporal matters, how much more bitter are they in the things which concern the soul! The “putting off” of repentance may be punished by years of worldliness and multitudes of sins: perhaps by the loss of the soul. Remember the fate of the “foolish virgins,” who “put off” preparations until the warning cry was heard,—for them, alas! too late,—“Behold, the bridegroom cometh!”

THE END.

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